

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE EFFECTS OF CHILDREN'S  
LITERATURE ON BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR  
AND OUTCOMES: THE BULLYING  
LITERATURE PROJECT

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Traditional approaches to bullying intervention focus on the bully-victim dyad. However, research indicates that bullying is a group phenomenon and often occurs in the presence of peer witnesses. Bystanders are uniquely situated to either deter or facilitate the social power play that can underlie bullying behavior. Specifically, individuals who bully others may be motivated by a desire to gain (or maintain) high status among their peers. Bystander-based bullying interventions are able to exploit this by directly targeting social components that reward and maintain bullying behavior, such as peer support of bullying, thereby disrupting the social feedback cycle involved in perpetration. However, bystander-based bullying interventions for elementary students pose a unique set of challenges in terms of fostering the awareness of bullying, social thinking, and cognitive-emotional skills that are necessary for positive bystander action. Children's literature is a promising medium to facilitate elementary-aged students' access to social-emotional knowledge, skills, and behavioral change. This study sought to add to the theoretical

research base of bystander behavior using a majority-Hispanic sample to investigate the relationships between several theoretically-linked bystander-related variables and determine predictors of positive bystander behavior. Secondly, this study investigated the effectiveness of a literature-based, bystander-targeted, bullying intervention (the Bullying Literature Project) on children's bystander behavior, attitudes towards bullying, prosocial behaviors, peer friendships, and victimization. Finally, potential moderators of the intervention on bystander behavior were investigated. Results revealed differences across grade and gender for select variables of interest, identified anti-bullying attitudes and victimization as significant predictors of positive bystander behavior, and identified a small, negative correlation between peer friendship and victimization, among other significant correlations. Main results revealed the Bullying Literature Project increased positive bystander behavior (small effect size) and teacher-rated prosocial behavior (large effect size), compared to the wait-list-control group, in a subset of the dataset. No moderation effects involving gender, peer friendship, or anti-bullying attitudes were found. Discussion and future directions of bystander-based bullying interventions are reviewed.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Statement of Problem**

Bullying in schools is an international concern at the forefront of research on aggression, school safety, and children's social-emotional health. Bullying occurs frequently in schools, with various forms of prevalence estimates ranging from 17.9 to 30.9 percent (Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016). Bullies, as well as victims and bystanders, suffer social, emotional, physical, and academic consequences from bullying perpetration (Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016). Furthermore, bullying affects the larger school environment and is linked to poor school climate and student perceptions of non-safety in schools (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013).

Bullying is considered a group phenomenon—incidents occur in the presence of peer witnesses, or bystanders, more than 80% of the time (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). In some cases, individuals who bully others may be motivated by a desire to gain (or maintain) high status among their peers (see review in Rodkin, Espelage, & Hanish, 2015). Therefore, in public displays of bullying perpetration, bystanders can serve as spectators that confer social status, and who—by assisting, reinforcing, or simply observing the bully—provide maintenance of the behavior and verify the bully's position of power. However, bystanders can also intervene to make the power play unsuccessful and disrupt the social rewards that bullying offers (Salmivalli, 2010). As such, influencing bystander behaviors may be an effective way to both impede a child's motivation as a perpetrator of bullying and protect vulnerable children from further victimization.

For these reasons, the focus of bullying research over the past few decades has expanded from only considering individual and interpersonal variables of the bully-victim dyad (e.g., bully aggression and victim vulnerabilities) to also focusing on bystanders, or the peers who are present during bullying perpetration. Promoting positive bystander behavior (e.g., defending) as a point of intervention to deter bullying perpetration is an approach that is gaining more attention, both within practice, research, and prevention literature (Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012; Salmivalli, 2014; Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016). A recent meta-analysis by Polanin and colleagues (2012) reviewed 12 school-based bullying prevention approaches that primarily focused on bystanders' behaviors and found that bystander-involved models were generally effective at increasing positive bystander behaviors. This is promising, given that observational research suggests that when bystanders do intervene on behalf of the victim, they successfully abate victimization more than 50% of the time (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001).

While current research demonstrates promise for bystander interventions as a bullying prevention tool, there is still a paucity of bystander-focused bullying interventions. Indeed, Polanin and colleagues' recent review of bystander-based bullying interventions highlight only a few high-quality studies that specifically target the behavior of bystanders as a focus for bully prevention (2012). Among these studies, many utilized the same intervention across different age populations (i.e., both elementary and middle-school-aged participants) despite the differing social group norms and peer expectations towards bullying that are likely to be involved across age groups.

This study seeks to specifically target elementary students' bystander behavior as

a means of early intervention for bullying/victimization. Bystander-based bullying interventions for elementary students pose a unique set of challenges compared to middle- or high-school settings in terms of fostering children's awareness of bullying, social thinking, and cognitive-emotional skills. Research highlights children's literature as a promising medium in which to facilitate elementary-aged students' cognitive-emotional development, social responsibility, and social-emotional learning (Prater, Johnstun, Dyches, & Johnstun, 2006). Through stories, students are likely to experience identification with the main character in the story, learn about others' thoughts and emotions, develop insight to solve the character's social problems, create awareness that others have similar problems, and discuss their own relevant experiences and problems (Paparoussi et al., 2011). For these reasons, many anti-bullying interventions include bibliotherapy in their activities. However, the effectiveness of bibliotherapy has rarely been evaluated for its empirical evidence. Specifically, there is a paucity of bibliotherapy bystander-based bullying interventions for elementary-aged students that exist to date.

The Bullying Literature Project (Wang, Wang, Couch, Rodriguez, & Lee, 2015; Wang & Goldberg, 2017) is a five-session bullying prevention program that uses children's literature (namely the books *Bullying B.E.A.N.S.*, *Just Kidding*, *The Recess Queen*, *Say Something*, and *The Juice Box Bully*) to facilitate social-emotional and behavioral change processes. All stories involved characters that modeled positive ways to solve conflict and engage in positive bystander behavior. Specifically, the program targeted pro-bully attitudes and beliefs, social-emotional skills (e.g., feelings identification and empathy towards the victim), behavioral strategies for peer conflict, and promoting bystander intervention (e.g., asking the bully to stop, being a good friend

to the victim, seeking help on behalf of the victim). Sessions were 35–45 minutes long. Interventionists read a story with students in the classroom, and then engaged students in discussion, writing, and role-play activities. Specifically, the discussion questions were designed to discuss key points in the story, help students identify feelings in the character, in themselves and others, promote positive bystander behavior, change attitudes regarding bullying, and highlight effective ways to handle bullying and peer conflict. After the story, students then participated in writing activities to reinforce the skills taught as well as role played effective solutions to handle bullying and being a good bystander. Positive bystander behavior strategies were explicitly taught to students through modeling, peer role-play, discussion, and activities.

### **Summary of Purpose**

This study uses secondary data from a larger archival data set to investigate a literature-based, bystander-focused bullying intervention. The purpose of this study is threefold. Firstly, this study aims to add to the theoretical research-base of bullying and bystander literature, using a majority Hispanic sample population, by investigating how variables of interest relate to each other and predict positive bystander behavior. Secondly, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Bullying Literature Project (Wang, Wang, Couch, Rodriguez, & Lee, 2015; Wang & Goldberg, 2017) on children's bystander behavior, attitudes toward bullying, prosocial behaviors, peer friendships, and victimization. Finally, this study aims to determine for whom the bystander intervention was effective for, by highlighting differential effects for different profiles of participants for the outcome of positive bystander behavior.

## **Chapter 2: Overview of the Literature on Bullying and Bystanders**

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

**Interpersonal Rejection.** Researchers have studied bullying perpetration and its causes for over three decades, largely within the wider framework of aggression and interpersonal rejection. An interpersonal rejection framework contextualizes peer rejection as a result of individual differences in personality traits and skills that places children at risk for victimization, relational aggression, and exclusion among peers (Bierman, 2004, as cited in Killen, Mulvey & Hitti, 2013). As such, early theoretical perspectives on bully perpetration specifically, were borrowed from the research fields of aggression, conduct disorder, and emotion dysregulation. Bullies were considered aggressive, antisocial agents, and children who bullied were seen as having biases and deficiencies in their social information processing. In contrast, victims were characterized by different social deficits and personality dispositions involving shyness, fear, or wariness. This social information processing was modeled as a five-stage process: assessing and responding to social situations via social perception, interpretation of perceived social cues, goal selection, response strategy generation, and response decisions (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999; Crick & Dodge, 1994). Under this conceptualization, bullying-related aggression resulted from misinterpreting another's hostility (hostile attribution bias), showcasing biased social perceptions, and reactive aggression to situations perceived as anger-provoking (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999). These aggressive personalities were thought to be stable over time and across social context (Olweus, 1978). The social-cognitive approach, advanced by Crick and

Dodge (1994), further conceptualized bullies through a social-skills-deficit model, which assumed that bullies have weak social skills that cause them to engage in aggressive acts.

This understanding of bullies as primarily unskilled social participants was dramatically altered after researchers distinguished between reactive and proactive aggression. Specifically, several studies demonstrated that bullying alternatively involved a *proactive, goal-directed* form of aggression rather than only reactive aggression associated with traditional hostile attribution bias and intention-cue detection deficits (Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016). This distinction allowed the conversation to not only consider children who bully as solely socially unskilled or emotionally dysregulated but also consider other bully types who may be *skillful manipulators* of social situations. Specifically, the latter type of bullies were found to be adept users of emotion understanding and theory of mind (aspects of social cognition) and used these skills to manipulate and organize others and achieve their social goals (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999).

Some research findings support the presence of socially-skilled bullies as bullies have a similar composition of social skills to their non-bully peers, but may lack empathy and use their social skills in different ways and for different purposes (e.g., maintaining status or showing power) (Olweus, 1993). For example, Gasser and Keller (2009) found similar social competence profiles between bullies and non-bullies, but lower moral competence among bullies specifically. Similarly, Gini, Pozzoli, and Hymel (2014) found comparable social competence scores between prosocial children and perpetrators. Nonetheless, the occurrence of the “reactive bully” or “classic bully,” who is low in



social skill assets and is not valued by the peer group, is also supported by research (Kumpulainen, Räsänen, & Puura, 2001; Olweus, 1993; Sourander et al., 2007).

It is likely that there is heterogeneity in bully profiles and that bullying is a result of a complex array of individual and environmental interactions that can create different bullying profiles. Still, as researchers consider social status and bullying behavior, studies show a clear pattern that children who bully others can certainly have power within their peer network and can be perceived by peers as popular, socially skilled, and as leaders (Thunfors & Cornell, 2008; Vaillancourt et al., 2003). Beginning in elementary school, some aggressive children are considered to be popular (Rodkin et al., 2006). By early adolescence, peer-directed hostile behaviors are robustly associated with social prominence or high status (Jovenen & Graham, 2014).

This broadened understanding of bully profiles has suggested a new line of inquiry into bullying prevention and intervention. Specifically, the goals for bullying intervention have shifted from solely remediating “deficits” in bully or victim social skills (e.g., empathy training for bullies or confidence building for victims) to targeting, via intervention, the social components that sustain bullying behavior. These social components include peer support of the bullying behavior (be it explicit or tacit), social outcomes (such as dominance or status), and the larger environment of involved institutional settings (e.g., school climate, rules surrounding bullying, school safety, teacher responsiveness to bullying) (Stevens, De Bourdeaudhuij, & Van Oost, 2000a; Kousholt & Fisher, 2015).

**Intergroup exclusion.** An important consideration when reviewing bullying and victimization theoretical frameworks is highlighting the difference between interpersonal

rejection and intergroup exclusion. Interpersonal rejection research (discussed above) focuses on the personality traits and individual skill-differences (e.g., social skills, empathy) that lead children to different roles involved in bullying (e.g., bully, victim, bully-victim, defender, observer, etc.). In contrast, intergroup exclusion research focuses on group membership and stereotypes and biases that lead children to exclude peers deemed in the “out-group”. Importantly, interpersonal rejection and intergroup exclusion can both lead to undesired outcomes related to victimization and exclusion—but through different pathways. While one framework situates the focus on individual social-skill profiles of involved players, the other framework necessitates an understanding of how group identity (e.g., peer friendships) is formed and how children treat peers with a different group status (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, nationality). Specifically, intergroup exclusion research investigates how moral, psychological, and societal considerations impact the exclusion decision-making process in children. As such, intergroup exclusion is an important and complimentary framework to interpersonal rejection, in understanding, predicting, and changing rejection and social exclusion among children (Killen, Mulvi & Hitti, 2013).

This specific study is largely concerned with variables related to interpersonal rejection rather than intergroup exclusion. In the next sections, I discuss the prevalence and stability, as well as the impact of, bullying related to interpersonal rejection. I will then discuss the importance of bystanders’ responses during such bullying episodes and review the variables that are linked to positive bystander behavior among children. Finally, I discuss developmental considerations related to bullying and how they impact bystander behavior.

## **Bullying**

**Definition.** Bullying is considered a unique form of interpersonal aggression where an individual or a group incites physical or emotional abuse on another individual or group (Polanin et al., 2012, p. 48). Bullying has been defined as “any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths” that involves a “perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated” (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014, p. 7). Experts in the bullying field usually agree on three central criteria for bullying: 1) intentionality, 2) some repetitiveness, and 3) an imbalance of power (Olweus, 2013; Swearer & Hymel, 2015; Ross & Horner, 2009). Intentionality refers to the intent, desire, or aim to inflict harm (i.e., injury or discomfort) upon another person. Repetitiveness involves the frequency of the behavior. Some researchers consider a bullying event that happens “once or twice” in the past couple of months as constituting a “repetitive” act (Olweus, 2013). The third criterion is a power imbalance. This refers to the power differential of social status or physical strength, that favors the perpetrator. This power differential is an important criterion, because it distinguishes bullying from other forms of conflict. While there may be some objective measures of power (e.g., physical strength, difference in numbers) researchers suggest the presence or absence of a power differential is subjective and usually determined by the victim (Olweus, 2013). Specifically, perceptions such as differences in self-confidence, popularity/status, the ability to defend yourself with a successful outcome, and the intentionality of the perpetrator as aiming to be hurtful, are all subjective elements that can go into an individual’s beliefs about who holds power.

**Prevalence and stability.** While estimates of bullying prevalence vary greatly, surveys suggest that a sizable portion of youth are exposed to bullying (Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016). Specifically, research suggests that 10% to 33% of students report victimization by peers, and 5% to 13% admit to bullying others (e.g., Cassidy, 2009; Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012; Nansel et al., 2001; Perkins, Craig, & Perkins, 2011; Peskin, Tortolero, & Markham, 2006). Only a few nationally representative and randomized surveys include prepubescent children in their prevalence rates. Examples include the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children Survey (HBSC; Iannotti, 2013) and the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV II; Finkelhor et al., 2015). Across these two surveys, rates of bullying ranged from 17.9% to 30.9% (Iannotti, 2013; Finkelhor et al., 2015).

Studies on the stability of bullying perpetration and victimization suggest these roles are dynamic. Specifically, a longitudinal study by Haltigan and Vaillancourt (2014) followed students from grade 5 to grade 9 and used dual-trajectory modeling to identify joint development of trajectories of bullying perpetration and peer victimization. This study identified four distinct trajectories: the first group involved low-to-limited involvement in perpetration or in being a target for bullying (low/limited involvement). The second group involved bullying perpetration that increased over time together with low levels of victimization (i.e., traditional bullies). The third group involved low levels of perpetration and moderate/decreasing levels of peer victimization (initial/declining victimization). The fourth group involved a victim-to-bully trajectory that was characterized by moderate decreasing rates of being targeted and increasing perpetration rates (victim-to-bully group). Overall, their results indicated a general instability for

initial roles of bully and victim. But the data did indicate that children who were classified in the *victim-to-bully* and *initial/declining* victim groups showed more pervasive elevations in parent- and child-reported symptoms of psychopathology across elementary and middle school and in Grade 9 compared to individuals with *limited involvement* in bullying or peer victimization. This research suggests that even while the status of being a victim may be temporary or evolve into a different status, the symptoms and increased sensitivity to maltreatment persists well after the bullying has ceased (Haltigan & Vaillancourt, 2014; Rudolph et al. 2011).

**Bullying-ethnicity relationship.** While bullying research within the United States has largely been conducted on European American students, research within the last few decades have explored the ethnic-group differences in bullying perpetration and victimization. Of specific relevance to this study are the rates of bullying and victimization within the Hispanic population. However, results are mixed for whether Hispanic children experience more bullying perpetration and victimization than other ethnic groups. Some studies have reported that Hispanic students are more likely to report being in fights, be injured in a fight, or be threatened with a weapon at school compared to non-Hispanic white students (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2010). In contrast, a recent meta-analysis by Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt (2018) of ethnic differences in bullying perpetration across fifty-three studies found no significant differences in bullying between White and Hispanic youth (a majority of studies reviewed were conducted in the United States). Theoretically, existing cultural models for groups from collectivist backgrounds (such as East Asian and Hispanic Americans) highlight strong discouragement and disapproval of aggressive behavior, which may lend itself to lower levels of bullying

compared to students with more individualistic backgrounds (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2018).

In terms of victimization, results are also mixed for whether ethnic minorities experience greater rates of victimization. Some findings indicate members of ethnic minority groups are more likely to be victims of general and/or ethnic forms of bullying compared to their national ethnic majority counterparts (e.g., Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). Relatedly, adolescents who speak other languages than English may have greater risk for victimization than English-only speakers (Yu, Huang, Schwalberg, Overpeck, & Kogan, 2003). However, in contrast to these findings, a recent meta-analysis found that white students report slightly higher levels of peer victimization compared to Asian and Hispanic students (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015).

Importantly, some research suggests that bullying-ethnicity relationship may be more dependent on context (i.e., the racial dynamics within a specific school or community or the ethnic makeup of that school) rather than any identifiable pattern of perpetration or bullying existing across the entire ethnic group (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Carlyle & Steinman, 2007). For example, research in peer processes suggests that children tend to like outgroup members less when their ingroup holds a norm of exclusion. However, school norms of inclusion and positive attitudes can help ingroup members increase positive perceptions of outgroup members (Nesdale & Lawson, 2011). Relatedly, the ethnic make-up of the school may also impact differences across ethnicities for victimization and bullying perpetration. Specifically, ethnic minority children may experience more peer victimization in schools where they are also the numerical minority, but experience the opposite (less victimization compared to other

ethnic groups) when they are in the numerical majority (Agirdag, Damanet, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2010; Graham & Juvonen, 2002). These findings support the power imbalance hypothesis (Graham, 2006; Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2006), that posits that individuals are more likely to be victimized in contexts where their ethnic group is relatively small, due to having less social power within that context.

When delineating the relationship between ethnicity and victimization, other research has considered the socio-ecological model (Espelage, Gutsell, & Swearer, 2004; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). One such important socio-ecological consideration is the impact of acculturation and acculturative stress.

Acculturation refers to the changes in practices, values, and identification, that occurs as a result of contact with multiple cultures. Acculturative stress occurs when there is a conflict between multiple cultures (e.g., between parent and child expectations, language, or cultural incompatibilities (Forster et al., 2013). One study found that acculturative stress was associated with higher levels of victimization (which in turn influences risk of depressive symptoms). This same study found that family cohesion (i.e., the emotional bonding and support among family members) was associated with lower levels of victimization (Forster et al., 2013). While family cohesion has been shown to protect adolescents from negative outcomes (e.g., psychological distress, substance use, and violence) (Hovey & King, 1996) among Hispanic immigrant families, family cohesion can decrease with acculturation to the U.S. culture or loss of Hispanic cultural values such as familismo (Sauceda, Wiebe, Chan, Kutner & Simoni, 2018; Hill, Bush, & Roosa, 2003).

In summary, when considering the bullying-ethnicity relationship, context appears to be the most useful consideration for supporting bullying prevention. Ensuring school norms of inclusion and ensuring positive intergroup contact can help abate negative perceptions towards outgroup members. Acknowledging the ethnic makeup of the school, accounting for cultural stressors that may leave students susceptible to victimization, and focusing on the cultural/familial protective factors against bullying perpetration and victimization, are important considerations for bullying intervention and perpetration for the increasingly diverse student population within the United States.

### **Effects and outcomes related to bullying.**

***Victims.*** A vast amount of literature highlights the link between victimization and internalizing behaviors (e.g., depression, anxiety) and self-esteem challenges (see McDougall, & Vaillancourt, 2015; Hymel & Swearer, 2015 for a review). Across elementary school age, peer victimization is predictive of greater feelings of loneliness (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2000; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996) and greater negative affect (e.g., anger, fear; Dill, Vernberg, Fonagy, Twemlow, & Gamm, 2004). Victimization in middle to late elementary and junior high school predicts lower self-reported social competence and global and social self-worth over periods of 6 months to 2 years (Bellmore & Cillessen, 2006; Boulton, Smith, & Cowie, 2010; Goldbaum et al., 2007). From middle childhood into early adolescence, higher levels of victimization are also linked to small-to-moderate increases in peer rejection (Hodges & Perry, 1999) and to peer dislike (Scholte, Engels, Overbeek, de Kemp, & Haselager, 2007). Beginning in early adolescence, stable victimization across a one-year time frame is linked to anxiety and withdrawal (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001). Furthermore, in a



systematic review and meta-analysis of 29 studies, Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, and Loeber (2011) reported a consistent link between victimization and depression from ages 8 to 16.

Victimization is also linked to externalizing behaviors, especially for boys (see review by McDougall and Vaillancourt, 2015). In a meta-analysis of 10 longitudinal studies, Reijntjes and colleagues (2011) documented that peer victimization among 5- to 13-year-olds, while controlling for earlier externalizing behaviors, predicted increasing externalization issues (e.g., aggression, delinquency, misconduct, and attention problems) two years later with modest effect sizes. These children were followed for up to 2 years. Research also suggests young people who are repeatedly victimized over periods of years in childhood, or at the early-to-middle adolescent stage, are at greater risk for conduct problems (Smith et al., 2004) and can turn into bullies themselves (Haltigan & Vaillancourt, 2014).

Importantly, longitudinal research suggests that these negative effects of being a victim are enduring and can last into adulthood (McDougall and Vaillancourt, 2015). Stapinski and colleagues (2014) found that adolescents who experienced frequent peer victimization were two to three times more likely to develop an anxiety disorder 5 years later at age 18, compared to non-victimized adolescents (OR = 2.49, 95% CI [1.62, 3.85]). A longitudinal study using two large population-based cohorts from the United Kingdom (the ALSPAC Cohort) and the United States (the GSMS Cohort), found that the effects of childhood bullying on adult mental health were stronger in magnitude than the effects of being maltreated by a caregiver in childhood (Lereya, Copeland, Costello, & Wolke, 2015).

Overall, while most longitudinal studies assert that psychological problems *result* from being bullied (see review by McDougall and Vaillancourt, 2015) and several meta-analyses (e.g., Reijntjes et al., 2010; Ttofi et al., 2011) support this directionality, other studies have found a “symptom-driven pathway”, where internalizing problems predict greater self-reported peer victimization (Kochel et al., 2012; Vaillancourt et al., 2013). For example, in a study by Kochel Ladd, and Rudolph (2012) depressive symptoms predicted peer victimization 1 year later (grade 4 to grade 5 and grade 5 to grade 6). These researchers posit that youth displaying “social deficits” or a non-accepted behavioral style by their peer group were more likely to be rejected by the peer group and as such, be prime targets for victimization (Kochel, Ladd, & Rudolph, 2012, p. 638). Overall, it appears that internalizing problems can function as both antecedents and consequences of bullying. As such, focusing only on social skill remediation is unlikely to eliminate victimization for all profiles of victims.

***Bullies.*** In contrast to victimization, the consequences of bullying involvement for individuals who perpetrate bullying behavior is less studied. Instead, most literature focuses on the victim, or on outcomes associated with aggressive children in general (rather than with children who bully in particular). Compared to their non-aggressive peers, several studies have found that perpetrators report lower levels of school engagement and belonging and higher rates of delinquent behavior outside school (Haynie, Nansel, & Eitel, 2001; Nansel et al., 2001). Gini and Pozzoli (2009) conducted a meta-analysis to test whether children between the ages of 7 and 16 who were involved in bullying behavior in any role were at risk for psychosomatic problems. They reviewed self-report questionnaires (reports from peers, parents, or teachers) and clinical ratings of

the subject's behaviors and health problems. Six studies that met the selection criteria were analyzed. These results indicated that children who bully had a higher risk of exhibiting psychosomatic problems than their uninvolved peers. While this meta-analysis is limited because of its cross-sectional and observational nature (i.e., it cannot indicate causal conclusions between bullying and psychosomatic problems), it does identify a potential link between child health and bullying perpetration.

***Bully-victims.*** Research indicates that many children experience the dual role of perpetrator in some situations and victim in others. These children are referred to as “bully-victims.” Bully-victims usually do not hold high social status and lack strong social skills—this puts them at risk of becoming both a target and a perpetrator (Rodkin, Espelage, & Hanish, 2015). Bully-victims tend to have worse outcomes compared to youth who are solely bullies or solely victims. Specifically, bully-victims report higher rates of depression. Reports of somatic complaints are also common (Rivara and Le Menestrel, 2016). Bully-victims have a higher probability for referral to psychiatric assessment compared to those who are primarily perpetrators and victims (Nansel et al., 2001; Swearer, Song, Cary, Eagle, & Mickelson, 2001). Bully-victims also suffer from higher rates of substance use compared to bullies and victims (Thompson, Sims, Kingree, & Windle, 2008).

***Bystanders.*** Witnessing bullying behavior may also affect mental health. For those who have been victimized in other settings, observing the victimization of peers can constitute a psychological re-victimization or co-victimization, which can increase mental health risk (D’Augelli, Pilkington, and Hershberger, 2002). Even witnesses who have never been victims can have heightened anxiety surrounding their own vulnerability of

being bullied (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000). In one study with middle school students, being a target of bullying did not moderate the relationship between being a bystander and having anxiety symptoms. Furthermore, bystander status was associated with higher levels of anxiety ( $\beta = .40, p < .001$ ) and depressive symptoms ( $\beta = .37, p < .001$ ) even after controlling for frequency of being a target or perpetrator of bullying. Additionally, bystanders who were also targets of bullying reported the highest level of depressive symptoms, perhaps due to re-victimization effect (Midgett & Doumas, 2019). In another study, a representative sample of 2,002 students aged 12 to 16 years attending 14 schools in the United Kingdom were surveyed using a questionnaire that included measures of bullying at school, substance abuse, and mental health risk. The results suggest that observing bullying at school predicted risks to mental health above and beyond that predicted for those students who were directly involved in bullying behavior as either a perpetrator or a victim (Rivers, Poteat, Noret, & Ashurst, 2009).

### **Bystanders and Participant Roles**

**Definition of bystanders.** A significant proportion of individuals within school systems are considered individuals who are bystanders during bullying perpetration (Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara, & Kernic, 2005). Twemlow, Fonagy, and Sacco defined a bystander as an “individual who witnesses a bullying event and who does not participate in bullying scenarios as either the bully or victim” (2004, p.13). As witnesses, bystanders may actively intervene to stop the bully, encourage the bully to continue, or act as passive observers. Bystanders can be either boys or girls (Smith, Twemlow, & Hoover, 1998). Bystanders who witness the bullying perpetration may have a diversity of reactions, attitudes, and reactions to the event, the bully, and the victim.

**Participant roles.** Based largely on observational studies and a peer-nomination method developed by Salmivalli and colleagues (1996), there are at least four major participant roles in typical bullying episodes in addition to the perpetrator-target dyad. They include assistants, reinforcers, defenders, and observers. Two participant roles support the individual who bullies: *assistants*, who get involved to help the perpetrator once the episode has begun, and *reinforcers*, who encourage the perpetrator by laughing or showing other signs of approval. *Outsiders* are passive bystanders who neither help the victim nor actively aide the bully and assistants. Outsiders are often perceived by victims and other observers as acting in collusion with bullies or giving silent approval to the bully's actions, even though they are not directly involved in the bullying action itself (Cowie, 2000; Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi, & Franzoni, 2008). *Defenders* usually actively come to the victim's aid (either by confronting the bully, consoling or showing support for the victim, or by finding the victim adult help). Research indicates that there are more assistants and outsiders than there are defenders in bullying situations. For example, the results of a study by Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, and Kaukiainen (1996) showed that only 17 percent of sixth-grade children witnessing bullying tended to defend the victim, whereas 26 percent assisted or reinforced the bully, and 24 percent withdrew from the situation. In a separate observational research study, less than 20 percent of witnessed bullying episodes had defenders who intervened on the target's behalf. However, defender actions successfully terminated the bullying about half the time (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001). In another study, the presence of defenders was associated with fewer instances of bullying behavior, whereas the presence of reinforcers was linked to an increased incidence of bullying (Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta,

2011). A study by Salmivalli and colleagues (2011) investigated participant roles in relation to the frequency of bullying in elementary classrooms. The sample consisted of 6,764 primary school children from Grades 3 to 5 (9–11 years of age), who were nested within 385 classrooms in 77 schools. The students filled out internet-based questionnaires in their schools' computer labs. The results from multilevel models showed that defending the victim was negatively associated with the frequency of bullying in a classroom, whereas reinforcing the bully showed a positive and strong association in classrooms with frequent bullying.

Overall, research on the understanding of participant roles indicates that bystander responses matter in decreasing victimization and bullying perpetration (Salmivalli, Voeten, Poskiparta, 2011). Individuals who bully others may be motivated to gain (or maintain) high status among their peers (Salmivalli, 2009). Popularity, dominance, visibility, and respect are status attributes assigned by the peer group, and individuals who bully may need spectators to confer these status attributes. The Participant Role Theory suggests that individuals who witness bullying may act as either a social facilitator or social deterrent for the bully-victim dynamic. Even for children who continue to be victimized despite bystander defending, consistent bystander defending from their peers may also help the child have some sense of belonging and safety compared to a child who is victimized without a defender (Salmivalli, 2014).

**Variables linked to defending behavior.** Research suggests both individual and group variables are linked to defending behavior. Individual variables that relate to a student's defender status include their pro-victim and anti-bullying attitudes and beliefs, their level of empathy and personal armory of social skills, their level of moral

disengagement, levels of self-efficacy in intervening, and their coping skills (Gini et al., 2008; Jenkins Demaray, Frederick, & Summers, 2016; Pozzoli & Gini, 2010; Nickerson & Mele-Taylor, 2014). Other individual variables include age and gender (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Group variables include an individual's social status within the group and social status compared to the bully's social status, as well as group norms, attitudes, and beliefs that surround defending (Pöyhönen, Juvonen, Salmivalli, & 2010; Pozzoli, Gini, & Vieno, 2012). These and other individual and group variables are described in greater detail below.

***Demographics.*** Research suggests that in mid-childhood, children tend to endorse pro-victim sentiments in terms of their attitudes and intentions, but that as they get older, sympathy for victims dissipates for both boys and girls (Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Rigby & Slee, 1991). In terms of actual defending behavior, there is a paucity of research that documents changes in defending behavior across age or trajectories of participant roles outside victim and bully roles. Research does indicate that younger children tend to be more supportive of victims in terms of peer-reported defending behaviors (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Classroom norms against bullying may also be stronger in elementary school compared to middle or high school—as rules against bullying may be more explicit, well-defined, and more consistently upheld compared to middle school or high school. One study corroborated this, showing that classroom norms were more against bullying among grade four classrooms than among grades five and six (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004).

Studies also indicate that gender affects bystander attitudes, approach coping strategies, and defending and passive bystanding behavior (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010,

Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Caravita et al., 2009; Gini et al., 2007). Specifically, when asked who defends people more in their classroom, students peer-nominate girls more often than boys (Menesini et al., 2003; Salmivalli et al., 1996). In a study on adolescent girls and boys in Italy, boys self-reported higher than girls in bullying and in passive bystanding behavior. Teachers also rated girls higher than boys in defending behavior and girls reported higher pro-victim attitudes compared to boys. Girls also scored higher in coping strategies involving seeking social support and self-reliance/problem solving (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010).

***Awareness, attitudes, and beliefs.*** General awareness raising refers to providing students with information about the different participant roles and group mechanisms involved in bullying. Educating students about their roles in bullying provides them the opportunity to understand that their behavior may encourage bullying. Explicitly revealing and discussing attitudes surrounding bullying can also reveal that sometimes individuals' actions differ from their intentions and beliefs, and that this discrepancy can have real consequences for the victim.

Children's attitudes and beliefs stem from their awareness of the effects of, causes of, and their own roles in, bullying. For example, a child who is not aware that other children also dislike bullying behavior may believe bullying is a "normal and expected" occurrence. Attitudes and beliefs are expected to coincide with participant roles in bullying situations and can serve as a proxy measure of children's perception in, and interpretation of, the bullying behavior in everyday life. Specifically, "pro-bullying" attitudes in students (attitudes that perceive bullying as something funny or not serious at all and or who consider victims as weak people who deserve to be bullied) tend to be



reinforcers or assistants to bullies (Boulton, Bucci, & Hawker, 1999; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). In contrast, “anti-bullying” attitudes in students predict both defending the victim or *withdrawing* from the bullying situation (being a passive observer) (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Only “pro-victim attitudes” appear to be consistent predictors of actual bystander defending (Pozzoli & Gini, 2012). Specifically, Pozzoli and Gini (2012) used structural equation modeling on 759 children and 995 early adolescents and found that positive attitudes toward victims predicted defending behaviors in both fourth/fifth graders and sixth/seventh graders. Pro-victim beliefs may have stronger links to defending behavior because they are victim-centered and focus on the victim’s plight rather than bully-centered and focused on the wrong-doing of an individual (which can pull for either intervening or avoiding behaviors).

Additionally, beliefs of *personal responsibility*, may also play a role in bystander behavior. For example, a child may have pro-victim or anti-bullying beliefs, but also feel like someone else should intervene or that it is not their role to intervene. An individual’s beliefs into their personal responsibility in a situation may impact their action above and beyond how they feel towards the victim or bully. Pozzoli and Gini (2012) demonstrated that active helping in a bullying situation was positively associated with personal responsibility for intervention, whereas low levels of responsibility were associated with passivity or not defending among fourth, fifth, seventh, and eighth graders.

Importantly, while overall research supports that most school-aged children have anti-bully attitudes and intentions to help or support the victim (Randall, 1995; Whitney & Smith, 1993), especially in hypothetical situations (Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Rigby & Slee, 1991; Whitney & Smith, 1993), research also suggests few children transform these

attitudes and beliefs into actual defending behavior (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Chapin & Bryack, 2016). Overall, these results suggest that helpful attitudes and beliefs concerning bullying and victimizations are necessary but not sufficient to facilitate bystander behavior—other constructs must come into play before defending occurs.

***Empathy.*** Empathy is the ability to recognize and share the emotions of another (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988). In general, empathy is conceptualized to be an important precursor of defending behavior—bystanders who can realize the distress or negative emotions of the victim may be in a better position to intervene compared to their peers who do not have strong empathy skills (Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009). Research documents a positive association with empathy and defending victims of bullying (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2008; Nickerson et al., 2008; Barchia & Bussey, 2011), and a negative association with perpetrating bullying (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2007).

Importantly, there are cognitive and affective components to empathy—referred to here as cognitive and affective empathy. Cognitive empathy involves the ability to recognize others' emotions and perspectives, whereas affective empathy refers to sharing others' feelings (Feshbach & Feshbach, 1982). When research differentiates between different types of empathy, different patterns emerge for participant roles. For example, Caravita and colleagues (2009) separated affective and cognitive empathy in their study and found that while affective empathy predicted defending behavior among boys in mid-childhood, cognitive empathy was positively related to bullying behavior, but only in adolescence. Most studies find that bullying is consistently negatively associated with affective empathy. However, findings are inconsistent for the relationship between

cognitive empathy and bullying. Several studies have demonstrated a negative correlation between cognitive empathy and bullying while others have shown no correlation between these constructs (e.g., Gini et al., 2007; Poteat et al., 2013) (see Van Noorden, Hasaleger, Cillessen, & Bukowski, 2014 for a review). The relationship between cognitive empathy and bullying may vary across age, gender, and frequency of bullying perpetration.

Researchers have also posited that the cognitive component of empathy does not in and of itself, impede aggressive behavior and instead, can be utilized by ‘ringleader bullies’ using their perspective taking abilities to maintain their social dominance via manipulation and bullying of peers (Sutton et al., 1999a, 1999b). Gender differences may also come into play, with one study showing a small positive correlation between cognitive empathy and bullying for girls and a negative correlation between cognitive empathy and bullying for boys (Gini, et al., 2007).

While affective empathy appears to be correlated to lower bullying perpetration, research is mixed on the empathy profile of a defender specifically. A study by Gini and colleagues (2008) found that empathy was positively related to both defending and passive bystanding. However, these items included both cognitive and affective empathy. A review of studies on empathy and participant roles indicated that defending correlated with both cognitive and affective empathy (Norden, Hasaleger, Cillessen, & Bukowski, 2014). Overall, these patterns suggest cognitive understanding of others’ feelings can be used to either harm others or to help others but that experiencing what others feel (affective empathy) is more likely to trigger helping behaviors (Caravita et al., 2009). Importantly, empathy alone may not account for a child’s participant roles. For example, research by Pöyhönen and colleagues (2011) found that the perceived popularity of the

student moderated the link between affective empathy and being perceived as a defender by peers (see the social status section for further discussion).

***General social skills.*** Social skills are observable behaviors that comprise an individuals' social competence. Social skills include specific skills such as empathy (discussed above), assertiveness, cooperation, communication, engagement, and responsibility (Gresham & Elliott, 2008). Researchers indicate that defenders are considered more prosocial/socially skilled; studies have found that social skills were significantly and positively related to defending behaviors for both boys and girls (Jenkins, Demeray, & Tennant, 2017). However, bullies can also use sophisticated social skills to manipulate others in social situations (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999). As such, individuals with high levels of bullying and defending behavior may have similar levels of social skills but use them in very different ways. For example, Jenkins Demaray, Fredrick, & Summers (2016) found bullying behavior to be negatively associated with cooperation and self-control and positively associated with assertion. In contrast, defending behavior had positive associations with social skills of assertion, empathy, and self-control.

In contrast to defenders and bullies, defenders and passive bystanders seem to utilize a similar set of social skills (Pozzoli & Gini, 2012). Both defending and passive bystanding are associated with adequate theory of mind skills and perspective-taking skills (Pozzoli & Gini, 2012). The similarity in social skill set between defenders and passive bystanders may be due to nature of bullying situations, which renders active defending different from every-day prosocial behavior or problem-solving. Specifically, intervening in bullying situations involves potential social risk or social difficulties and

repercussions that may not exist when exhibiting pro-social behavior in other contexts (e.g., inviting other someone to play a game who appears lonely has different repercussions then siding with a victim that has been humiliated in front of the entire class) (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). For these reasons, the constructs of moral disengagement, self-efficacy, coping skills, social status, and group norms must be considered in order to further differentiate between the profile of a defender vs. the profile of a passive bystander.

***Morality and moral disengagement.*** Some researchers posit that differences in moral sensitivities may lead to differences in helping vs. non-helping behavior. Thornberg and Jungert propose a definition of basic moral sensitivity to refer to “an individual’s readiness in morally simple situations to recognize moral transgressions and their harming consequences toward others, a sensitivity related to aroused moral emotions such as empathy, sympathy, or guilt” (2013, p.3). Morally simple situations can be thought of as moral transgressions that are unambiguously wrong because there is a clear harm that will be caused to the person who is weaker or socially disadvantage compared to the perpetrator. Bullying situations are often considered morally simple situations as they usually involve a person exerting social or physical power on a weaker target. Witnessing morally simple situations usually triggers an emotional arousal/reaction (guilt, shame, sadness) without conscious cognitive effort and automatically triggers moral schemas, scripts, or stereotypes (Thornberg and Jungert, 2013). Differences in moral sensitivities—or the ease of emotional arousal in a clear-cut bullying situation—may be linked to differences in helping vs. non-helping behavior. Menesini and Camodeca (2008) worked with children aged 9–11 to determine their

participant roles via peer nomination and then measured students' feelings of guilt and shame as they read hypothetical bullying situations. They found that students who were nominated as passive bystanders or bullies tended to feel less guilty or ashamed compared to nominated prosocial (defender) children during these hypothetical bullying scenarios.

Importantly, children can have intact moral sensitivity but also have other factors that impede the likelihood of helping during a bullying situation. One such construct is moral disengagement. Moral disengagement is the process where an individual essentially disengages with a global moral standard to justify their conduct (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). In practice, this may mean that children fail to intervene because they believe that the specific actions of the aggressor are justifiable, even though they hold general beliefs that bullying is wrong. Bandura et al. (1996) outlined four sets of mechanisms by which immoral conduct can be justified. They are reconstructing the conduct, obscuring personal causal agency, misrepresenting or disregarding the injurious consequences of one's actions, and vilifying the recipients of maltreatment by blaming and devaluing them. Consistent with this moral disengagement framework, children who act as defenders of victims of bullying report lower moral disengagement than bullying perpetrators (Gini, 2006; Menesini et al., 2003).

While moral disengagement can clearly differentiate between bullies and defenders, other research shows that moral disengagement may not clearly differentiate between defenders and passive bystanders (Menesini et al., 2003). As discussed above, just because a child has awareness, pro-victim attitudes and beliefs, and social-cognitive and emotional skills does not necessarily mean that he or she will use this ability to

intervene in favor of a bullied peer (Pozzoli and Gini, 2012). Other constructs that are closely tied to behavioral change may need to be utilized before an observer becomes a defender.

In contrast to theories that posit non-defenders may lack moral sensitivity or may utilize cognitive processes to disengage from obvious moral standards, research within the field of moral reasoning notes that children who may be “transgressors” do not lack morality—but rather their difference in behaviors relates to different interpretations of ambiguity and complexity. For example, in a study in Columbia, South America, children were interviewed who had high exposure and low exposure to violence. Both groups viewed straightforward moral transgressions as wrong. In contrast, children who were exposed to violence, did not judge inflicting harm and denying resources as wrong if the person was provoked and did not judge retaliation as wrong if there was a reason for retribution (Ardila-Rey, Killen, & Brenick, 2009). As such, interpretation of a complex or ambiguous bullying scenario, may relate to different moral conclusions on who is right and wrong.

***Self-efficacy.*** Self-efficacy, in the context of defending, refers to confidence in one’s ability to intervene. This characteristic is strongly linked to actual defending behavior. Specifically, research suggests that students are unlikely to defend the victim unless they believe in their ability to do so. For example, in their study with Italian adolescents, Gini, Albiero, Benelli, and Altoè (2008) discovered that social self-efficacy (i.e., students’ perception of being competent in social situations) was linked to defending behavior and was a key in differentiating defending behavior from passive bystanding. In contrast, a study by Andreou and Metallidou (2004) using a sample of fourth and sixth

graders found that self-efficacy for assertion was not associated with standing up for a victim. It is likely that these different findings can be explained by the operationalization of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy may need to be directly defined toward the behavior in question (e.g., actual defending behavior instead of global social self-efficacy) in order to see the effects of self-efficacy on defending behavior (Peets, Hodges, & Salmivalli, 2008).

Importantly, behaviors are not only influenced by individual self-efficacy beliefs but also by beliefs of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Collective self-efficacy represents beliefs in a group's ability to achieve a collective outcome (Bandura, 1997). In terms of defending the victim, individual behaviors can be encouraged by positive perceptions of school-wide efforts to prevent bullying. For example, a longitudinal study on adolescents found that high levels of collective efficacy beliefs—the belief that teachers, students, and other stakeholders can all work together to stop peer aggression—predicted a higher frequency of defending behavior over time (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). Collective efficacy may be especially powerful for encouraging bystander behavior, because youth who engage in defending may engage in social risk and open themselves up to social vulnerabilities of becoming a target themselves. Combating this social risk with high collective efficacy may offer a way to protect a defender from being viewed as a “tattletale” or from losing social status after siding with an unliked peer (see the group and classroom norms section below for further discussion).

***Coping skills.*** Observing bullying can be perceived as a stressful event. A study involving sixth-grade students had them describe their daily personal experiences as they witnessed accounts of peer harassment, and to rate their negative feelings across a two-



week period. Witnessed harassment was associated with increases in daily anxiety (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005). Additionally, deciding whether to intervene and assessing the risk that they would be the next target is a source of stress. Specifically, when non-involved children in bully–victim incidents were interviewed, children identified fear surrounding losing social influence, fear of being bullied in retaliation, and a lack of ability to handle bully–victim problems effectively, as barriers to intervening (Thornberg et al., 2012). Coping strategies can be helpful in alleviating the stress of observing bullying. However, different coping strategies may lead to different bystander actions and outcomes. Pozzoli and Gini (2010) found that defenders tend to employ approach-oriented coping strategies (such as trying to solve the problem or seeking support from peers and adults), whereas passive bystanders favor avoidance-oriented strategies (i.e., behavioral, cognitive, or emotional activities oriented away from a stressor to avoid it, such as distancing or internalizing). As such, teaching and practicing approach strategies rather than avoidance strategies may be in an important aspect of bystander-based bullying interventions.

***Social status.*** In addition to personal characteristics, social status in the peer group relates to bystander behaviors and other participant roles. Social preference or social likeability refers to how much a student is liked, and not disliked, by their peers. Social preference is measured by peer nominations of the most liked and least liked children within a classroom. Social preference is linked to prosocial behavior (Wentzel, Filisetti, & Looney, 2007) and specifically with defending in mid-childhood (Caravita et al., 2009), preadolescence (Salmivalli et al., 1996), and adolescence (Caravita et al., 2009). In contrast, perceived popularity (i.e., being perceived as popular even if they are

not greatly liked) is associated with both prosocial and antisocial interactions (including bullying others) (Caravita et al., 2009; Cillessen & Rose, 2005). Perceived popularity is measured by children electing the popular students within their classroom. Importantly, research suggests that the link between social status and defending vs. bullying varies by the age of the child. Socially preferred girls and boys show a positive association with defending behavior across both mid-childhood and adolescence. In contrast, popular children show a positive association with defending behavior in mid-childhood, but show a positive association with *bullying* behavior in adolescence (Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009).

Both social likeability and popularity appear to relate to defending behavior, with defenders in mid-childhood viewed as both popular and well-liked among their peers. However, these constructs may have differing moderating effects on other variables' connection to defending behavior. For example, Pöyhönen and colleagues (2010) investigated how peer status moderates the effects of emotional and cognitive factors on defending behavior. For children in grades 4 and grades 8, perceived popularity moderated the relationship between affective empathy and defending behavior as well as between self-efficacy and defending behavior. In contrast, social preference only demonstrated a marginal moderating effect on the relationship between students' affective empathy and self-efficacy. These results suggest that popular defenders, with high social status, act as the likely challengers of bullies. In the same way that high-status bullies abuse this social power (Juvonen, Graham, & Shuster, 2003; Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003), defenders may be empowered in their high status to easily challenge the bullies. In contrast, students without this social power, despite levels of

affective empathy or even self-efficacy to defend, may hesitate to make a power play with a high-status bully without having a similar social status themselves (Juvonen & Galván, 2008).

Overall, research suggests that one variable that may impact the likelihood of being a defender is the social status of the bystander and of the bully. In general, in classrooms where the bully was popular, bystanders were found less likely to stand up for the victim in the bullying event (Peets et al., 2015). In contrast, children who have high social status themselves and feel a sense of moral responsibility to intervene are more likely to help the victim (Pöyhönen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2010; Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). Importantly, research suggests that removing the social rewards of bullying from the perpetrator may be important for supporting defender behavior, especially for popular defenders. Specifically, among third and fifth graders, Peets and colleagues (2015) found that popular students were more likely to support victims in classrooms where bullying was associated with low social rewards (i.e., in classrooms where bullying was not rewarded with popularity by the peer group). As such, creating group norms surrounding the unacceptability of bullying behavior by targeting all children in the classroom can indirectly empower students who have the social capital to intervene.

***Group and classroom norms.*** Bullying behavior is sometimes approved by social norms that do not necessarily reflect the private attitudes of most group members. However, these norms still create compliance within the group (Juvonen & Galvan 2008). There are many reasons why defending attitudes do not always lead to defending behavior. Namely, children are more likely to display a behavior if their peers display the same behavior (Barhight, Hubbard, Grassetti, & Morrow, 2017). Children's drive to

socially conform may be at odds with certain behaviors, such as intervening (Salmivalli, 1999). As such, children are more likely to intervene in classrooms with cultures that made intervention more normative (Barhight, 2017). For example, Rigby and Johnson (2006) documented that simply believing that their friends expected them to support the victims was a predictor of students' expressed intention to intervene (for hypothetical bullying scenarios). Other studies indicate that group variables, such as in-group and peer group norms, can support defender behavior (Nickerson & Mele-Taylor, 2014). For example, bystanders are more likely to help when the expectation of what peers ought to do (injunctive norms) and descriptive norms (what they actually do) favor the victim. Children's belief that their peers expected them to intervene predicted defender behavior, individual attitudes, feelings of responsibility, and coping skills in both primary and middle school students (Pozzoli & Gini, 2012). Overall, school climate and teacher-student relationships also link to bullying behavior. Researchers posit that when students have a negative relationship with their teachers and perceive their school environment as high conflict, unfair, unfriendly, and non-supportive, they are more likely to participate in bullying (Gendron, Williams, & Guerra, 2011; Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013).

### **Developmental Considerations of Bullying and Implications for Bystander**

#### **Interventions**

**Social status of young children who bully.** The theoretical orientation of a bystander-focused bullying intervention assumes that a socially adept bully holds sway over his peer network and that bystanders perpetuate this social status quo. However, there are mixed findings regarding the social pull of young children who bully. While some studies have found that bullies are relatively popular among their peers, across

ages, and as early as age five to eight (Alsaker & Nägele, 2008; Cillessen & Rose, 2005), other research has found that younger students who bully have less “peer status” (i.e., peer status is moderated by age). These discrepancies may be partially explained by considering how peer status is measured. For example, in the meta-analyses by Cook and colleagues (2010), peer status was a strong and significant *negative predictor* of bullying among 3- to 11-year-olds and a non-significant predictor of bullying others in older adolescents (Cook et al., 2010). However, their measure of peer status did not differentiate between social preference and popularity. In a different study that analyzed social preference and popularity separately, bullying in mid-childhood and adolescence was negatively linked with social preference, but at the same time positively associated with perceived popularity (Caravita et al., 2009). Overall, research provides evidence that some bullies are popular but not well-liked, even in young populations.

**Types of aggression in young children who bully.** Yeager, Fong, Lee and Espelage (2015) discuss reasons to expect developmental differences across bullying behavior and how that may affect bullying program effectiveness. They propose that across development there are a) changes in the manifestation of problem and b) changes to the underlying causes of problematic behavior. Specifically, what bullying looks like shifts from direct forms of aggression, such as hitting or insulting in young children, to indirect forms, such as rumors/exclusion in adolescence. They also posit that there may be a shift in the underlying causes of problematic behavior, with younger bullies having lower social skills shifting to older bullies using social skills to gain and maintain social status (Yeager et al., 2015).

This has implications for understanding peer behavior and bystander behavior as well: if a bully's profile changes across development, then bystander perceptions, attitudes, peer norms, contributions to the bullying phenomena, and bully-victim dynamics may also vary by peer group age. Likely, children may encounter both these socially unskilled/peer-rejected and socially adept/popular type of bullies across elementary, middle, and high school. Indeed, in a qualitative study involving 14 focus groups across 115 elementary, middle-, and high-school students, participants described how popular bullies (with high self-esteem and a desire to demonstrate social prowess) can be integrated into the school environment, while reactive bullies (with emotional problems, low self-esteem, and prior victimization) may be marginalized (Guerra, Williams, & Sadek, 2011). Some researchers posit that even marginalized bullies may also be using instrumental aggression to attain social power, although not as adeptly as their popular counterparts due to their lack of social prowess (Rodkin, Espelage, Hanish, 2015). For these reasons, using bystander interventions to showcase a variety of bully profiles, bullying scenarios, and potential bystander actions, may allow children to role play a variety of situations they may come across at school. With both types of bullies, doing nothing as a bystander does not help the victim nor deter the bully, and may perpetuate an unhelpful social feedback loop.

**Implications for bystander behavior in young children.** If bullying and the reasons for bullying change across age groups, it stands to reason that peer motivations that perpetuate the bullying and barriers to intervening, may change as well. Among earlier peer groups (elementary school) where bullying tends to be less accepted (Randall, 1995), bystanders may perpetuate the bullying through their lack of knowledge

and awareness of when bullying is happening, how they are helping the bullying to keep happening, and a lack of responsibility, self-efficacy, and perspective taking. These challenges may be best remediated in a bystander intervention focused on these areas of concern. In contrast, bystander concerns may change for middle-school or high-school students, who might be more concerned about retaliation from the bully and threats to their own social status, as very real barriers to why they do not intervene. In these cases, peers that have a high social status and are willing to intervene may be likely targets of intervention. Despite these potential differences in barriers to intervening, there is likely to be overlap in bystander issues that range across ages. These may include constructs of self-efficacy to intervene and developing an awareness of what constitutes bullying and actions they can do to help the victim.

### **Summary**

The bullying literature suggests that a sizeable portion of youth are exposed to bullying and that bullying contributes to negative social-emotional, behavioral, and health outcomes for the victim, bully, bully-victim, and bystander (see Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016 for a discussion). Furthermore, while the initial participant roles of a bully or victim in elementary school are likely to change across middle and high school (i.e., victims may continue to be victims, experience a decrease in victimization, or experience an increase in perpetration), victims experience elevated psychopathology that continues into high school when compared to their peers who are not involved in bullying as the perpetrator and/or victim (Haltigan & Vaillancourt, 2014). Although early theoretical perspectives on bullying identified bullies as unskilled social participants, recent research and theory also depicts bullies as skillful manipulators of social situations, adept users of

social cognition, and able to use a similar composition of social skills compared to their non-bully peers (Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016; Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999; Olweus, 1993). Research also indicates that bullying often happens in a group setting with witnesses, and individuals who bully others may be motivated by a desire to gain (or maintain) high status among their peers (see review in Rodkin, Espelage, & Hanish, 2015). For these reasons, bystander-based bullying interventions target the social components that maintain bullying behavior, including peer support of bullying, in an effort to disrupt the social feedback cycle involved in perpetration (Stevens, De Bourdeaudhuij, & Van Oost 2000a; Kousholt & Fisher, 2015). Specifically, encouraging defender behavior within the classroom is a popular target of bystander-based interventions, as defenders can disrupt the social peer feedback that supports bullying.

The profile of a defender includes children with strong anti-bullying and pro-victim attitudes (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004), who are prosocial and show empathy (Jenkins, Demeray, & Tennant, 2017; Caravita et al., 2009; Pöyhönen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2010), have high self-efficacy related to defending (Gini et al., 2008), use approach coping strategies (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010), and have high social status (Pöyhönen, Juvonen, Salmivalli, 2010). Defenders also tend to be younger (pre-adolescents) and girls (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). In contrast, children in pro-bullying roles (bullies, assistants, reinforcers) have attitudes that are more approving of bullying (Boulton, Bucci, & Hawker, 1999; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004), and lack affective empathic understanding for the victims (Pöyhönen & Salmivalli, 2008). Importantly, it can be difficult to differentiate the profile of a defender and passive bystander—they have similar social skills and may not differ in levels of empathy



(Pozzoli and Gini, 2012; Gini et al., 2008). However, passive observers compared to defenders tend to have lower pro-victim attitudes (Pozzoli and Gini, 2012), have less belief in their personal and collective self-efficacy to defend, and tend to have lower social status compared to defenders (Pöyhönen, Juvonen, Salmivalli, 2010).

Interventions that utilize Participant Role Theory often target bystanders' awareness of their roles in a bullying incident and help them gain knowledge of the effects of bullying on the individual child, by providing a chance for self-reflection. They also seek to train his or her empathy skills, rehearse behaviors different from the *status quo*, and help participants improve responsibility and efficacy to intervene as a bystander. While improving an individual's social status is usually not a target of bystander-based interventions, bystander interventions also aim to change the group and classroom norms that can perpetuate the social rewards that a perpetrator gains. Research suggests when bullying is less accepted in the classroom, popular students with an affinity towards defending (due to high affective empathy or defending self-efficacy) are more likely to defend the victims (Peets, Poyhonen, Juvonen, Salmivalli, 2015). As such, bystander interventions can facilitate those children with high social status—who are best equipped to defend victims against bullies—by impacting the general groups' attitudes and beliefs towards bullying and lessening social rewards associated with bullying. Bystander interventions can also assist students with lower social status in intervening by offering alternative bystander behaviors (e.g., telling a teacher, being kind to the victim afterwards) that do not necessarily pit a lower social status peer against a high social status bully.

Finally, an overview of the literature highlights important developmental considerations for the dynamics of bullying, victimization, and bystanders. For young children compared to adolescents, group norms may be determined by both the respective peer group as well as by authority figures (teachers and other adults). While in adolescence, bystanders may hesitate to intervene for fear of retaliation or inept defending skills, in elementary school, bystanders may perpetuate the bullying through their lack of awareness of when bullying is happening and lack of knowledge of how their silence or attention to the event perpetuates bullying episodes. As such, remediating these knowledge and skill-deficits and providing positive group norms surrounding bullying should be key goals in a bystander-based intervention focused on young children.

### **Chapter 3: Overview of Bystander Interventions**

#### **Definition**

While many programs concerning bullying prevention and intervention focus on the psychological processes and outcomes of the bully, victim, and bully-victim dynamic, research has also shifted to include bystander behavior. Bystander-based bullying interventions are a subset of bullying interventions that focus on witnesses (e.g., peers, teachers, school staff) as a point of entry for bullying prevention and intervention. Bystander-based interventions attempt to shift peers' attitudes, beliefs, awareness, and knowledge about bullying and utilize measures that ascertain bystander behavior. Importantly, bystander interventions hope to increase the rate of peer intervention in bullying situations and to thereby decrease the frequency of victimization and bullying that occurs. The theoretical grounding for the formulation of bystander-based bullying interventions usually involves an indication of bystanders as social perpetrators of the bullying phenomena; theoretical underpinnings also highlight the role that peer and group processes play in contributing to bullying. As such, bullying prevention interventions that mainly focus on aggressors or victims (e.g., by remediating social skill deficits) instead of bystanders, or that do not employ a theoretical grounding that considers group dynamics and participant roles in perpetuating bullying phenomena, are considered to be more traditional anti-bullying interventions. In contrast, bystander-based bullying interventions tend to consider bullying as a group phenomenon and target bystanders as a means of negating the social rewards for the perpetrator, supporting the victim, and changing the overall group dynamic that facilitates bullying.

## **The Role of Peers in Bullying Prevention**

Peers may have a positive impact on bullying behavior, victims' psycho-social outcomes, and the larger school climate (Salmivalli, 2010). However, caution should be taken about the types of roles youth play in bullying prevention. Many researchers have suggested the need to “distinguish between the role of peers as bystanders [and defenders] in bullying situations vs. peers as potential leaders or implementers of intervention programs” (Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016, p. 224). Specifically, programs that are facilitated solely by peers, such as peer mediation or peer-led conflict resolution, forced apology, or peer mentoring, may not be appropriate in bullying prevention, as they potentially pit the victim face-to-face with the bully without remediating the underlying power dynamic (Rivera & Le Menestrel, 2016). A meta-analysis of school-based anti-bullying programs found null or even iatrogenic effects for peer-led bullying programs, with some studies seeing an increase in incidents of targeting, rather than a reduction in bullying-related behaviors, and other programs seeing an increase in supportive attitudes of bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). In contrast, select studies on bystander-based interventions have found promising outcomes for decreasing bullying and victimization (e.g., Karna et al., 2013; Noncentini & Menesini, 2016), and increasing anti-bullying, positive attitudes and beliefs, and self-efficacy to intervene (e.g., Frey, 2005; Stevens, 2000b; Polanin et al., 2012). As such, bullying interventions that involve peers should focus on peers as bystanders who can intervene rather than peers as leaders of conflict-resolution meetings or peer mentoring.

## Relevant Theoretical Approaches

As discussed above, initial bullying prevention strategies focused mainly on individual determinants of children's psycho-social problems and did not extensively consider external factors to the individual that may perpetuate bullying. However, recent interventions have considered the school's environmental characteristics and the impact of social structures (e.g., peers, teachers, principals) on bullying prevalence in schools. Common theoretical approaches used in bystander interventions are discussed below. Importantly, these approaches have considerable overlap and may often involve the social and psychological processes active within a peer group and larger social and structural contexts. As such, they can be considered as broad theoretical approaches to bystander behavior.

**Social-cognitive model.** Considering the driving thoughts and expectations of a child perpetrator within the larger context of social feedback is an important consideration when forming a bystander-based bullying intervention. Bandura's (2001) *social-cognitive theory* emphasizes the role of cognitions as facilitators of individuals' behaviors. Specifically, this theory proposes that there is a continuous interaction between the social environment (e.g., witnessing others' behaviors), internal stimuli (e.g., cognitions and feelings), and the individuals' behaviors. An important feature of the theory is the impact of social influence and external and internal social reinforcement. That is, individuals acquire and maintain behavior based on their past experiences. Perpetrators of bullying may believe that they will be rewarded in some way (e.g., increased social status, access to resources) based on previous experiences (lack of consequences, social approval, goal attainment). These bullying behaviors may then be

maintained and repeated over time, as these individuals continue to receive reinforcement from their peers and others (via praise and acceptance) (Craig & Pepler, 1995; Mouttapa et al., 2004; O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). For example, one study found that students who bullied on the playground were reinforced by their peers for the bullying behaviors in the majority (81%) of incidents (Craig & Pepler, 1995). Bullying may therefore sometimes be understood as a means to a social reward (power or dominance) and a way to gain social outcomes through the use of aggression. In this way, children who join in the bullying or merely form an audience contribute to the expected behavioral outcomes and reinforce bullying behavior (Stevens et al., 2000a). Furthermore, social-cognitive theory stresses the importance of self-regulatory beliefs in motivating and regulating behavior (Bandura, 1999). These normative beliefs help provide standards for acceptable vs. unacceptable behavior, impact emotional reactions to others' actions, and facilitate the use of acceptable scripts in certain social situations (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). Normative beliefs may be global ("It is okay to hit others") or more situation-specific ("It is okay to hit others if they hit me first").

For a bystander, cognitions regarding the normality of bullying, empathy for the victim, beliefs on who else may intervene, the importance of intervening, and conceptions of social influence, social power, and the likelihood of success should they intervene, may impact the likelihood of intervening. Since most bystander interventions seek to change bystander behavior and the processes that lead up to the behavior, they may utilize theories of behavior. Specifically, the *theory of planned behavior* stems from the field of social psychology (Ajzen, 1991), and has large overlap with facets of social-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1999). Central to the theory is that intentions are key

influencers of behavior. In order to change intentions, participants' awareness of bullying, beliefs about subjective norms surrounding bullying, and their perceived efficacy to intervene are targeted. Specifically, the theory of planned behavior model for bystanders in bullying situations translates to changing (a) awareness of bullying (is it noticed and differentiated from other interactions such as teasing or joking?), (b) attitudes toward bullying and intervening (e.g., approval, disapproval, neutrality, disinterest), (c) subjective norms concerning bullying and intervening (what do others think is an appropriate response? Do others expect me to respond?) and (d) beliefs about behavioral control and personal efficacy (will my intervention be effective?) (Hawley & Williford, 2015). Bystander interventions that employ this framework seek to target and impact bystanders' perceptions/attitudes, subjective norms, and efficacy beliefs/perceived behavioral control to facilitate intention to intervene and finally the intervening behavior (e.g., Andreou et al., 2008).

**Social-ecological model.** Bronfenbrenner's *social-ecological theory* of human development (1986; 1999) reflects a bidirectional interaction between the individual and the environmental systems in which they function (family, neighborhood, school, community, and society). This model details that macrosystems (community, school) influence both the mesosystem (classrooms) and microsystems (individual students and teachers, peer groups), and that these interactions are reciprocal. Research questions that stem from this model involve the way that children who bully, victims, and bystanders are reciprocally influenced by classroom and school norms (Swearer & Espelage, 2011). Other research questions involve how some ecological environments favor group norms against bullying while others favor norms supporting aggression and perpetration

(Salmivalli, 2014). Interventions under a social-ecological framework are often school-wide and focused on maintaining positive school and classroom norms, in addition to addressing pro-bullying norms within peer group ecologies (Olweus, 1993; Rodkin, 2004). However, on a smaller scale, bystander interventions targeted towards peers can be conceptualized as researching a dynamic interaction among variables at different levels of social interaction (individual, dyadic, and group) (Salmivalli, 2010).

Several bystander interventions consider a “whole-school” approach to bullying that is consistent with the social–ecological framework (Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananjadou, 2004; Espelage, Gutshell & Swearer 2004). This approach addresses the social environment and the broader culture and climate of bullying. In these interventions systems-wide awareness, training, and discussions, targeted at adult bystanders as well as peer bystanders, may happen concurrently with more targeted interventions at the peer group level. Reviews of general bullying interventions find that these comprehensive, multi-level interventions involving several stakeholders are the most effective at reducing the occurrence of bullying (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007).

**Group socialization theory.** Group socialization theory (Harris, 1995) posits that when individuals (of any age) are put into groups, certain processes naturally emerge. These mechanisms include group-contrast effects (that facilitate in-group preferences and outgroup discrimination), within-group assimilation (which encourages conformity to group norms and expectations), and within-group differentiation (which establishes and maintains social hierarchies within groups). These normal and adaptive processes that maintain group structures can also provide harmful opportunities for peer bullying and victimization (Hymel, McClure, Miller, Shumka, & Trach, 2015). For example, within-



group favoritism and out-group discrimination may allow individuals to justify bullying if the peer is not a member of the same group. Bystanders may view the child who bullies as maintaining in-group norms and blame the victim for ignoring in-group norms (Hymel, et al., 2015). As such, interventions that use a group theory process may attempt to change these peer group norms. For example, they may form smaller groups and target incorrect assumptions of group norms (ex. people my age aren't bothered by bullying so I should not be either vs. bullying bothers us but we don't quite know what to do about it) or researchers may specifically target the anti-bullying sentiments of "social referents" (highly visible/popular group members that impact group norms) to change their norms and respective social networks.

Group theory processes provide helpful guidelines and areas of caution for group-based interventions. For example, researchers must consider the make-up of the group. Research shows that groups composed primarily of aggressive children may facilitate and perpetuate aggressive and deviant behavior (Dodge et al., 2006). Hymel, McClure, Miller, Shumka, and Trach (2015) offer a critique of bystander interventions through the lens of group theory processes. They argue that it is unwise to expect all peers to openly confront a bully and that researchers must consider each person's social placement and social susceptibility (e.g., lack of social power of a bystander, or social exclusion of the bystander because of their actions). Instead, Hymel and colleagues (2015) suggest that teachers have a powerful impact on group norms and dynamics, particularly with elementary school populations. Therefore, using adults in bystander interventions to change peer group norms and create a sense of community may be an important consideration.

## **General Characteristics of Bystander Interventions**

There is a scarcity of reviews that delineate the actual characteristics and components of bystander-based bullying interventions. While a complete review of all bystander-based bullying interventions is outside the scope of this study, *Appendix A* provides an overview of popular bystander-based bullying interventions that explicitly seek to change bystander behavior, among other outcomes. Across these programs, bystander-based bullying program characteristics (i.e., age and grade level of participants, location of the study, duration of the intervention, measures of bystander outcomes, intervention components, and media used to deliver information) vary greatly. Important characteristics of bystander behaviors—namely the types of bystander interventions, outcomes, and measurements in bystander interventions, and effectiveness of bystander interventions—are summarized below.

**Types of bystander interventions.** School-based anti-bullying interventions can be broadly divided into two types—an intensive “universal type” and less intensive “curriculum-type” (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). Several bystander-based interventions utilize a resource-heavy, universal, “whole-school approach.” Examples include the KiVa Program (Noncentini & Menesini, 2016), Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Supports (BP-PBS; Ross & Horner, 2009) and Steps to Respect (Frey, 2005). Whole-school-wide programs usually include school-wide guides, playground supervision, classroom management, teacher training, explicit anti-bullying classroom rules, a whole-school anti-bullying policy, school conferences, information for parents, cooperative group work, classroom lessons and rules, and set school rules for how bullying incidents are to be handled. Posters and other visual signs (staff wearing vests during recess times,

assemblies) are also incorporated into the school. Parent guides can be sent to the home as well.

A less resource-intensive approach involves curriculum-based-only interventions. Curriculum-based-only interventions are designed to be implemented in certain groups or classrooms within the schools. While whole-school approaches may or may not include classroom lessons, activities, or a curriculum, whole-school approaches rely on a potency effect that occurs with the implementation of the intervention across the entire school. In contrast, curriculum-based-only interventions usually solely target the classroom setting and the unique needs of the classroom make up. They may include small-group and whole-group discussions led by the teacher or a researcher, role-play exercises and modeling, contracts and stating intentions to intervene, short films about bullying, posters, parent guides, and establishing class rules based on the central themes of the lessons.

Three general principles that are usually adopted in classrooms for bystander interventions are awareness-raising, self-reflection, and commitment to anti-bullying behavior. Raising awareness about bullying in general, and the group mechanisms involved in it in particular, may be a good starting-point for effective curriculum-based intervention work (Salmivalli, 1999). Usually, a curriculum-based approach involves discussing with the whole class topics such as what bullying is (how it differs from occasional teasing or conflicts between students), how it feels to be bullied, and discussion of group mechanisms that perpetuate bullying. Through self-reflection, it is also important to make students aware of the discrepancy between their attitudes and behavior, as most students have attitudes against bullying, but behave in ways that

encourage and maintain bullying in the class. Finally, most curriculums seek to foster a commitment to anti-bullying behavior, which entails helping students find, and commit themselves to, alternative ways of behaving as individuals and as a group in order to put an end to bullying.

One benefit of a curriculum approach is flexibility in catering the intervention to the specific needs and issues in the classroom. These can include semi-scripted or completely scripted lessons focusing on social-emotional skills for positive peer relations, emotion management, and recognizing, refusing, and reporting of bullying behavior. Some curriculum interventions also include videotapes and activities to foster discussion, including activities such as personal drawings of victimization or completing open-ended questions about participant roles (e.g., Stevens et al., 2000a). Skills are typically practiced using modeling and role-playing techniques. Other types of intervention have involved computer-based lessons, cognitive behavioral therapy, training select youth as peer influencers, small group social skills training, small support groups, and short video interventions—although these intervention types are currently a rarity in bystander-based intervention literature. Several studies across different intervention types (e.g., whole-school, curriculum) utilize different media, such as videos, computer games, and literature (namely Schumacher, 2007; Stevens et al., 2000a; Kiva et al., 2013).

**Outcomes and measurement in bystander interventions.** Targets of bystander-based interventions typically involve changing bystander attitudes/beliefs, prosocial behavior and empathy, intention and self-efficacy to intervene, and actual bystander behavior (e.g., defending the victim; telling the teacher) (Whitaker et al., 2004; Noncentini & Menesini, 2016; McLaughlin, 2009; Ross & Horner, 2009). Bystander

behavior is often measured using peer nomination or self-report. A popular peer-nomination measure is the Participant Role Questionnaire (PRQ; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). This questionnaire presents a definition of bullying and then asks the respondents to think about situations in which somebody had been bullied. For each item, participants nominate classmates who most often behaved in the way described, and rate how often each of these classmates behaved in that way using a two-point scale (1 = sometimes, 2 = often). The questionnaire uses 12 items that form four scales reflecting different participant roles: bullying (“Starts bullying,” “Makes the others join in the bullying,” and “Always finds new ways of harassing the victim”), assisting the bully (“Joins in the bullying, when someone else has started it,” “Assists the bully,” and “Helps the bully, maybe by catching the victim”), reinforcing the bully (“Comes around to watch the situation,” “Laughs,” and “Incites the bully by shouting or saying, ‘Show him/her!’”), and defending the victim (“Comforts the victim or encourages him/her to tell the teacher about the bullying,” “Tells the others to stop bullying,” and “Tries to make the others stop bullying”). In scoring this instrument, the nominations received are first tallied for each item and divided by the number of nominators. Finally, two scale scores were created by averaging across the three defending and three bullying items. The participant role scales have shown good internal consistencies in previous research (e.g., Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Karna et al., 2013). One caution with using the PRQ when doing school-based research is that parents and school communities may be uncomfortable with students nominating other children as bullies or reinforcers of bullies. Additionally, some researchers who wish to studying defending behavior in depth may require more specific items related to potential defending behavior.

For these reasons, many bystander interventions create their own measures of bystander behavior and participant roles. These are mainly self-report measures where a child notes the frequency that they exhibit various bystander behaviors. While some measures are simplified to include only defending and non-defending categories, other measures ask about all possible participant roles (bully, assistant, defender, passive bystander, etc.).

**Effectiveness of bystander interventions.** Overall, there is a paucity of research that delineates the effectiveness of bystander-based bullying interventions specifically. As such, my discussion here borrows from the larger literature of outcomes related to bullying prevention effectiveness. There is mixed evidence for how effective school-based programs are in preventing bullying in the U.S. Some meta-analytic studies of bullying interventions have shown limited or even negative effects for decreasing bullying at schools (see Nickerson, 2017 for a review). Other reviews on bullying preventions/interventions found more positive results for attitudes and knowledge of participants but no improvements in actual bullying behavior (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross & Isava, 2008; Smith et al., 2004). In contrast, a more recent meta-analysis by Ttofi and Farrington found promising positive outcomes: of the 44 evaluations, bullying decreased by 20–23% and victimization decreased by 17–20%, on average. Program elements and intervention components associated with this decrease in bullying and victimization included parent meetings, firm support from school staff in terms of disciplinary methods, improved playground supervision, and longer duration and intensity.

Concerning interventions that target bystander behavior specifically, a meta-analysis by Polanin and colleagues (2012) investigated effectiveness from 12 school-

based programs, involving 12,874 students. Results indicated that overall, bystander-based bullying programs were successful in impacting bystander behavior (i.e., increasing intention to intervene, intention to stop bullying, direct intervention—that is “seeking teacher’s help,” “reacting against bullying,” and “supporting the victims of bullying”) (Hedges’s  $g = .20$ , 95% confidence interval [CI] = .11 to .29,  $p < .001$ ). Larger effects for high-school samples were found in comparison to kindergarten through eighth grade (K–8) student samples (HS effect size [ES] = .43, K-8 ES = .14,  $p < .05$ ). This same meta-analysis also investigated bystander interventions’ impact on empathy for the victim. Treatment effectiveness was inconclusive due to low sample size (only eight studies included a measure on empathy; effectiveness here was positive but not significantly different from zero).

Considering causes to the differential success of each bystander outcome in the intervention can provide better clarity for bystander-based intervention effectiveness. Past reviews of broader bullying interventions have found that the effectiveness of the studies vary across methodology and experimental design, setting, age, and type of intervention (whole-school, curriculum, computer, etc.) (e.g., Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Nickerson, 2017). As such, the effectiveness of bystander interventions may also vary across these dimensions. These possibilities are reviewed below.

***Methodological differences and experimental design.*** There are no reviews of the impact of methodology and experimental design in bystander-based bullying interventions. However, for general bullying interventions, mixed findings that surround the effectiveness of interventions may partly stem from the use of different inclusion criteria across studies (e.g., language, type of publication, sample size, types of bullying

outcome measures, and a focus on studies conducted in North America) (Bradshaw, 2015). The effectiveness of intervention studies is also impacted by challenges with experimental design: studies often lack a control group to examine causal effects, they sometimes lack the long-term follow-up studies which are needed to demonstrate that the intervention has lasting effects, and they rarely use randomized controlled effectiveness trials. The benefits of effectiveness trials are that an intervention is carried out by school personnel (e.g., teachers instead of trained researchers) to test the effectiveness of the intervention in more naturalistic settings (Bradshaw, 2015). Yet research frequently only involves efficacy studies which inflate intervention success, as interventions tend to be implemented by highly trained researchers in controlled settings with optimal conditions. Due to the current gap between research and practice in psychology, more research is needed to examine the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs carried out by non-researchers in real world environments.

***Setting.*** There are no reviews on how the setting or location impacts bystander-based intervention effectiveness. For bullying interventions, the setting or location of an intervention also impacts its effectiveness. A comprehensive meta-analysis by Farrington and Ttofi (2009) found that bullying and victimization outcomes were less effective in the US and Canada when compared to European countries. These results were replicated in a systematic review of bullying research, which found that the majority of studies that observed significant effects on bullying behavior appeared to have been conducted outside of the United States (Evans, Fraser, & Cotter, 2014). More research is warranted



to determine how characteristics of the setting of bullying interventions may impact program effectiveness.

***Developmental level and bystander outcomes.*** The effectiveness of general bullying prevention programs may also depend on the developmental level of students. While most research supports the claim that bullying interventions have a stronger effect on decreasing bullying perpetration in middle school age and older students than on younger students (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009), recent meta-analyses have suggested the opposite. Specifically, a recent meta-analysis by Yeager and colleagues (2015) reviewed 19 studies that administered the same program to multiple age groups and measured levels of bullying (with a total of 72 effect sizes) and found efficacious results for bullying prevention programs in grades 7 and below, nullified results in grade 8, and harmful effects of bullying prevention programs in grades 9–12. As such, more research is warranted to determine how different outcomes across different age groups are impacted by bullying prevention and intervention.

In terms of bystander-based interventions specifically, while Polanin and colleagues' (2012) found that older bystander students (high schoolers) had better outcomes for their bystander behavior, these authors did not differentiate between different bystander outcomes when reporting results (for example, they combined results on bystander responsibility, bystander attitudes/beliefs, intentions to intervene, and actual intervening behavior outcomes). When considering different bystander outcomes across age, preliminary patterns of differential success are highlighted. One example is Karna and colleagues (2011; 2013), who utilized the KiVa whole-school intervention, modified for different age groups, across elementary, middle, and high school. Specifically, in

grades 4–6 they found several positive results for changes in bystander behaviors, including an increased self-efficacy for defending (self-report), increased bystander assistance (e.g., defending the victim), and decreased reinforcing of the bully (peer report), compared to control. In contrast, in the 7–9<sup>th</sup> grade population they observed a significant decrease in assisting the bully and reinforcing bullying for boys, but also an unexpected decrease in *defending* behavior for boys, compared to control. These results across the KiVa study suggests that high-school boys in the experimental group, while ceasing to actively assist or support the bully, became more passive bystanders who still did not intervene. Within the high-school sample, this negative effect on defending did not depend on the age of the student themselves, but increased with the average age in the classroom, suggesting that the older the peer network was, the lower the level of an individual's defending behavior.

Another KiVa study (performed in Italy) looked at bystander outcomes of attitudes and social skills in 4<sup>th</sup> graders (elementary students) compared to 6<sup>th</sup> graders (middle school students). For both 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade, students stayed in the same classroom for the majority of the day with the same teachers. Noncentini and Menesini (2016) found higher rates of increase in pro-victim attitudes and empathy toward the victim for 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the intervention compared to control. For 4<sup>th</sup> graders they also found a decrease in pro-bullying attitudes over time in both the experimental and control group, but with higher rates of decrease in the experimental group. In the 6<sup>th</sup> grade sample, *pro-bullying* attitudes decreased across time in the experimental group and increased in the control group. However, there was no significant difference between control and experimental for *pro-victim* attitudes (Noncentini & Menesini, 2016). These

results suggest different patterns of bystander attitudes and beliefs depending on the grade. In the 4<sup>th</sup> grade experimental and control group there was a general trend of dislike towards bullies during the school year. In contrast, for 6<sup>th</sup> graders, there was a pro-bullying increase in the control group that did not receive the intervention during the school year. As such, elementary-aged children may be more susceptible to the targeting of *pro-victim* beliefs compared to their older counterparts (i.e., 6<sup>th</sup> graders' pro-victim attitudes did not differ from control over the year, while in 4<sup>th</sup> graders the intervention increased pro-victim attitudes compared to control). Results from Stevens and colleagues' (2000a) curriculum-based intervention, which also contrasted elementary students with middle-school students, found a similar pattern. Specifically, there were non-significant effects after the follow-up for the middle-school students' anti-bully beliefs, pro-victim beliefs, self-efficacy to intervene, and extent of intervening. In contrast, the study found outcomes approaching significance for follow up with elementary-school-aged children (10- to 12-year-olds) in terms of attenuating the decrease of intervening behavior over time, compared to controls.

Finally, the specific bystander outcome of *actual bystander defending* (e.g., a bystander telling a bully to stop or finding help for the victim) may also vary by age. For example, one study that looked at both high school and elementary students' bystander defending outcomes reported iatrogenic effects for the high-school participants (i.e., decreased defender behavior for high schoolers after the intervention compared to control) (Karna et al., 2013). Importantly, rather than due solely to age, these lack of effects and iatrogenic effects, which are specifically found in the studies that occurred in the United States, may also be due to how the American middle-school curriculum is

delivered. As students move to different classrooms, with different student makeups, taught by varying teachers, it may be harder to impact and shape classroom group norms.

Overall, elementary-age students may be more susceptible to interventions led by teachers and adults. In contrast, older students may be less impacted by adult norms, expectations, and modeling of appropriate behavior. Additionally, elementary-aged students may face fewer barriers to intervening, as peer-group norms may be easier to change through teacher and adult intervention, and they may fear less retaliation from the peer group for intervening. This may be especially true because anti-bully sentiments are already more common for younger students. Furthermore, if bullying events are more obvious (physical vs. relational) young students may also feel more self-efficacy and have better awareness of when to intervene. In contrast, older students may not feel as secure in their “defender” status and may still fear retaliation from the bully or their peers if they perceive that the peer norm has not been largely impacted by the adult-led intervention. Importantly, there are many other reasons why interventions may be less effective in older populations and across bystander outcomes. For example, behaviors may be harder to change due to long prior history and entrenched peer-group expectations. Additionally, the connection between age of the student and the effectiveness of the intervention outcome may be confounded by treatment delivery differences of American schools versus other countries’ treatment delivery. However, these effects of less effectiveness with older participants are seen in other countries (e.g., Italy) even when students stay in the same classroom for the majority of the day, which supports that age in-and-of-itself is likely an important factor for intervention effectiveness.

***Types of intervention.*** A review by Vreeman and Carroll (2007) showed the effectiveness of whole-school type bullying interventions above other intervention forms (e.g., curriculum, social skills training, computer based). However, whole-school bullying interventions are often time- and resource-intensive and demand a considerable amount of staff training and orientation to implement the intervention with fidelity.

### **Bystander Interventions as Bibliotherapy Programs**

**The role of bibliotherapy in early intervention.** One challenge of intervention and social-emotional learning for bystander behavior in bullying is facilitating young children's perspective taking (i.e., considering another student's point of view and inner-feelings) and affective empathy. Building these skills is a theoretically central task for a bystander-based bullying intervention. Bibliotherapy may offer an appropriate approach to make abstract social-emotional skills more concrete, to increase empathy towards others, and to model appropriate social behaviors. There are two types of bibliotherapy—developmental bibliotherapy and clinical bibliotherapy. Developmental bibliotherapy involves sharing books and stories to help with typical adjustment issues (friendship, conflict with peers, bullying) whereas clinical bibliotherapy addresses significant emotional needs (e.g., sexual abuse, trauma, mental illness). Developmental bibliotherapy offers a way to support children's social-emotional learning and would be appropriate to use in schools and incorporate into the curriculum to provide a classroom-based intervention (Heath, Smith, & Young, 2017). Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young, and Money (2005) offer an outline for bibliotherapy that involves (a) pre-reading activity that draws the child into the story (this may involve a few questions about the story to pique child's interest), (b) increasing children's engagement by connecting certain aspects of the story

to their personal life (identification), (c) having the children place themselves in the character's role and experience and the character's feelings (catharsis), and finally (d) emphasizing the core message at the end of the story. In this process, children are meant to experience a change in thinking and attitude (insight) and should then be encouraged to talk about and apply their newly developed insights to make changes to the way they think and act.

Research suggests that bibliotherapy has positive outcomes in changing youth symptomatology and behaviors. A recent systematic review, conducted by Montgomery and Maunders (2015), found small-to-moderate effect sizes for internalizing and externalizing problems. Research studies that use literature as an intervention have also found positive results on treatment for adolescent depression compared to control and a comparison treatment (e.g., Stice, Rohde, Seeley, & Gau, 2008). At a 6-month follow up, students in the bibliotherapy group continued to maintain decreased symptoms of major depression (Stice et al., 2008). These findings support the need to continue investigation into the inexpensive intervention of bibliotherapy.

Furthermore, researchers have suggested that it is important to incorporate bullying prevention and intervention programs into the regular curriculum at school (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). Since bullying reaches its peak during the middle school transition (Pellegrini & Long, 2002), early intervention programs targeting elementary school students may help reduce the risk during the transition by teaching students more socially appropriate ways of interacting with peers and creating a climate in which bullying is seen as an unacceptable way to gain social standing. Using bibliotherapy with existing children's literature in the classroom setting

may facilitate early intervention and facilitate social-emotional learning outcomes related to positive bystander behavior.

In addition to social-emotional learning, reading literature can also have an impact on children's attitudes and intention to connect towards "out-groups." Research within the field of "extended contact" suggests that while children may have unfavorable intergroup attitudes across domains of ethnicity, gender, nationality, and disability, more favorable attitudes can be facilitated by "vicarious" experiences of friendship (e.g., reading about a character in one's in-group being friends with another character from an out-group). Results from a study by Cameron, Rutland, and Brown (2007) performed in the UK found that reading stories where two characters from different groups were friends—that is, when the stories highlighted friendship situations, followed them on adventures, with both represented groups depicted in a positive light—it resulted in more positive intergroup attitudes and intentions to connect with the outgroup. Specifically, participants aged 6–9 years old who read a story about a character with a disability (physical or learning) and his non-disabled friend reported more positive intergroup attitudes and intentions to connect with members of the out-group compared to participants who were not exposed to these stories. This result was replicated with participants aged 6–11 years old with a story about a refugee child and non-refugee child, with participants reporting positive attitudes and intention to connect with refugee children in hypothetical situations. Additionally, these findings highlight that unlike similar studies (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) it was not necessary to also focus on specific commonalities between the two groups (e.g., both characters that represent different groups share the commonality of attending the same school or liking the same

sport, etc.) to encourage contact. Instead, these stories only focused on general friendship, but were still successful in increasing intergroup positive attitudes and intended contact (Cameron, Rutland & Brown, 2007). This research suggests that literature can encourage intergroup contact, which in turn can facilitate improved social relationships, connectedness, and attitudes towards peers.

**Current bibliotherapy interventions.** The body of research investigating the effectiveness of bibliotherapy is not extensive (Jack & Ronan, 2008). Additionally, bibliotherapy is not well-integrated with the immense bullying research literature (Moulton et al., 2011). In general, research indicates that bibliotherapy has proven effective in treating childhood emotional and behavioral problems, including depression (Smith, Floyd, Scogin, & Jamison, 1997; Stice, Rohde, Seeley, & Gau, 2008), anxiety disorders (Rapee, Abbott, & Lyneham, 2006), darkness phobia (Santacruz, Mendez, & Sanchez-Meca, 2006), and aggression (Shechtman, 2006). While few bystander bibliotherapy interventions exist, a few bullying-prevention programs have used literature to impact victim and bully outcomes. These study outcomes are promising in terms of being able to change students' aggressive behaviors and maladaptive beliefs using literature and, as such, supports the proposal that parallel programs that specifically target bystander's behaviors may also exhibit similar success. These literature-based bullying prevention studies are reviewed in further detail below.

***STORIES.*** *STORIES* is an elementary school literature-based early intervention program targeted at students demonstrating aggressive behaviors. *STORIES* uses select children's literature as a medium of discussion for bullying situations and to facilitate empathy and conflict-resolution skills in students with aggressive behavioral concerns



(Teglasi & Rothman, 2001). A key component of STORIES is the incorporation of pro-social peers in order to avoid negative group dynamics that can develop when several participants have externalizing or aggressive behavior concerns. The class was broken up into smaller groups (4 to 6 students, with 1 or 2 identified as aggressive) to facilitate discussion after reading (Teglasi & Rothman, 2001). Results of this intervention found that children identified as aggressive in both the treatment and control groups showed an increase in externalizing behaviors (Teglasi & Rothman, 2001). However, the increase was significantly less for those involved in the intervention compared to the control groups (Teglasi & Rothman, 2001). The empirical support for the STORIES program is still developing, and this program also involves some logistical challenges to implementation, in that it requires additional group leaders to facilitate smaller group discussions.

**WITS program.** The WITS program also uses children's literature to teach strategies for dealing with peer conflict. Specifically, this whole-school intervention uses literature to facilitate discussion surrounding bullying situations and strategies for handling them (Leadbeater & Sukhawathanakul, 2011). The WITS program targets victims and teaches four skills for handling peer conflict and bullying (**W**alk away, **I**gnore, **T**alk it out, and **S**eek help). The program also creates expectations surrounding how bullying situations will be handled, with parents, community leaders, and teachers encouraged to use these strategies in a variety of settings. Community leaders, specifically police officers, are actively involved in the implementation of WITS by teaching students about the program, participating in a school-wide assembly, and encouraging students to pledge to use their WITS. Parents are provided with resources

and materials to help them reinforce the use of WITS strategies at home and enable them to have discussions with their children about effective peer-conflict-resolution strategies.

A study of the WITS primary program found more rapid declines in victimization at schools implementing WITS compared to control schools (Leadbeater & Sukhawathanakul, 2011). A longitudinal evaluation of WITS found significant declines in victimization over a six-year period (Hoglund, Hosan, & Leadbeater, 2012). However, researchers are still unsure of which components or combination of components contribute to its effectiveness (Leadbeater & Sukhawathanakul, 2011). Importantly, the WITS program does not explicitly teach bystanders to seek help for others they see being victimized (Hoglund et al., 2012).

**4Rs.** The 4Rs program is a universal, school-based intervention for grades K–5 based on social-emotional learning (SEL) and literacy development that integrates a focus on social and emotional development into language arts curricula (Jones, Brown, Hoglund, & Aber, 2010). This program utilizes children’s literature as a springboard for helping students gain skills and understanding on areas of anger, listening, assertiveness, cooperation, negotiation, mediation, building community, celebrating differences, and countering biases. Designed to change how children think, feel, and behave about interpersonal conflict, this program involves 21–35 lessons and 25 hours of training for teachers (Jones, Brown, Hoglund, & Aber, 2010). There are seven units, with each unit focusing on a grade-appropriate children’s book. Units begin with a book reading and discussion, followed by three to five SEL skill lessons where students practice specific skills in the context of a discussion of the book (e.g., an “understanding and dealing with feelings” unit might focus first on identifying feeling words from the story, practice

reading other students' feelings that are acted out, and then identify strategies for "cooling down" through role play). A study on the 4Rs intervention measured child aggression (teacher report), social competence (teacher report), depressive symptoms (self-report), attention/hyperactivity (teacher report), and academic skills in 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, during a year-long intervention. Results indicated main effects after 1 year on students' reports of hostile-attributional biases and depression. Additionally, for the subset of children identified with the highest levels of aggression at baseline, they experienced a decrease in aggressive fantasies, increase in academic skills, reading achievement, and attendance (Jones, Brown, Hoglund, & Aber, 2010).

***Bystander-based bibliotherapy interventions.*** Overall, these studies present some support for using literature to decrease hostile attribution biases, depression (Jones, Brown, Hoglund, & Aber, 2010) and victimization at school (Leadbeater & Sukhawathanakul, 2011). Still, there are few bibliotherapy interventions to date that have been created to impact bystander behavior and outcomes. There are two exceptions known to this author. *Steps to Respect* (Frey et al., 2005) utilized a whole-school approach (including a school-wide program guide and staff training to foster responsiveness to bullying) with a strong curriculum component for third-through-sixth graders. Weekly one-hour lessons, taught over 2–3 days, were implemented over a twelve-to-fourteen-week period. Lessons centered around ten semi-scripted "skill lessons," focusing on building social-emotional skills for positive peer relations, emotion management, and recognizing, refusing, and reporting of bullying behavior. Upon completion of skill lessons, teachers implemented a grade-appropriate literature unit, based on existing children's books. Results of the intervention indicated less student

acceptance of bullying, more responsibility felt by students to intervene on behalf of friends that were being bullied, and greater adult responsiveness to school bullying, compared to the control group. However, no effects were found for teacher-rated social skills or actual bystander behavior. Importantly, in this program literature was only used as a supplement to the scripted skill lessons and was not fully integrated within each lesson as a scaffold for students' social-emotional understanding and behavioral change. As such, it may or may not constitute as a true bibliotherapy bystander program.

Another bibliotherapy bystander program was implemented by Andreou, Paparoussi, and Gkouni on fifth graders in Greece (2013). The program centered around one story, which was fragmented across lessons, such that students would do group activities, role-play, discuss, and brainstorm based on what had happened so far in the story. Students were often asked to write in their diaries how they spent their day at school, pretending to be a particular character in the story or acting out a part of the story as a specific character. These lessons were embedded inside the wider curriculum of the fifth-grade classrooms. The entire intervention consisted of twenty instructional hours implemented within a two-month period with the intervention taking place 2 or 3 times a week. The program was implemented by two classroom teachers in two different classrooms. Children's bullying behavior and victimization, participant roles, attitudes towards bullying, intentions to intervene in bully-victim problems, perceived efficacy of intervening and actual intervening behavior were investigated using student report. An experimental pretest/posttest design, with a control group, was used. The results indicated a positive reduction in 'outsider' behavior and an increase in pro-victim attitudes and self-efficacy for intervening in bully/victim incidents.

**Limitations of bibliotherapy.** Bibliotherapy provides a framework of discussion of bullying and for insight into others' perspectives and feelings. However, bibliotherapy alone does not necessarily provide bystanders with direct instruction on how to react to bullying and initiate behavioral change. Students being victimized or involved as bystanders may need to be explicitly taught new, appropriate strategies to use in the bullying situations they encounter based on stories that may or may not model this behavior. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory posits that individuals learn how to interact in social situations through observational learning or direct instruction. By observing how others behave and how people in their environment respond to their behavior, individuals are able to learn new behaviors and the contexts in which to use them (Bandura, 1977). Explicitly teaching bystanders skills to address bullying using instruction and modeling has been found to positively affect bystander behavior (Ross & Horner, 2013). In Bully Prevention – Positive Behavior Support (BP-PBS), bystanders and victims are taught to utilize hand signals and verbal prompts to signify to an aggressor to stop their behavior and are encouraged to report bullying to teachers and staff (Ross & Horner, 2009). Teachers and staff are trained to respond to bullying situations in a consistent manner and to reinforce students who effectively utilize the hand signals and verbal prompts. By changing bystander, victim, and staff behavior, BP-PBS has been able to successfully reduce incidences of bullying behavior at elementary schools (Ross & Horner, 2009). While this research shows promise for the effectiveness of explicit behavioral instruction, BP-PBS intervention requires both buy-in from all staff to ensure that the behaviors taught are reinforced consistently and an existing PBS framework within the school to be successful. Using literature to help children access

others' thoughts, feelings, and emotions, build empathy, change attitudes, and raise social awareness, paired with explicit instruction/modeling and opportunity for observational learning to apply these new skills, presents a promising combination in ensuring positive bystander behavior.

### **The Bullying Literature Project**

**Rationale.** Educators are tasked with providing social-emotional learning opportunities and supports and providing safe schools and climates for students. Bullying prevention programs that can be easily incorporated into an existing curriculum, are resource-efficient, and that show promise for facilitating positive attitudes, beliefs, empathy, and behavior towards peers are needed (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009). Programs that target bystanders, and not just victims or children who bully, can change peer-group dynamics surrounding what is considered socially appropriate ways of interacting with peers, can help create a climate in which bullying is an unacceptable way to gain social standing, and can empower students with high social status and an affinity towards defending to help the victim. Additionally, bystander interventions show promise for abating actual rates of bullying and victimization, as when bystanders intervene they successfully abate victimization more than 50% of the time (Hawkins, Pepler & Craig, 2001). Bibliotherapy is a way to make abstract social-emotional skills more concrete and to provide a framework within which to discuss bullying and bystanders, create insights, and explore behavioral strategies. Children might identify with fictional characters and bullying situations both at a cognitive and emotional level and gain insight more easily than when talking directly about their own experiences (Flanagan et al., 2013). Using bibliotherapy with existing children's literature can allow interventionists to access

children's social-emotional skill development in the classroom setting in a way that may support positive bystander behavior outcomes. As such, bibliotherapy holds promise as a potential tool to strengthen positive, supportive, and inclusive classroom environments, to create an environment where bullying is not socially sanctioned, and to empower select children (especially those with high social status who may already have an affinity towards defending) to actively support and defend victims.

The *Bullying Literature Project* (BLP) is a bystander-based bullying intervention that uses quality children's story books on bullying and bystander behavior, with associated reading and writing activities, explicit instruction, role play, and modeling, that can be easily integrated into a school's existing literature arts curriculum (Wang, Wang, Couch, Rodriguez, & Lee, 2015; Wang & Goldberg, 2017). The study I present here is novel in that it used bibliotherapy coupled with explicit skill instruction to target bystander behavior in a majority Hispanic sample. This study specifically targeted middle childhood—third and fourth graders—as research suggests that a decline in defending behavior occurs from middle childhood to adolescence (e.g., Caravita, Gini, & Pozzoli, 2012; Pozzoli et al., 2012).

**Theoretical background.** The BLP utilizes a social-ecological framework by specifically using literature targeted at modeling good bystander behavior, rather than solely attempting to target deficits in the victim or bullying perpetration. The BLP also invites teacher and staff participation by having teachers model appropriate social behavior within the lesson and encouraging school staff to reward students for their use of skills and strategies. Finally, the BLP includes several means of involving parents, for

instance by encouraging students to share their writing projects with their families each week.

The BLP also recognizes the social-cognitive factors that may go into bullying and unhelpful bystanding, and it uses this to inform the intervention. Namely, the BLP recognizes that bullying may offer a social reward for the bully and that unhelpful bystanding may be driven by certain beliefs (e.g., pro-bully and anti-victim beliefs, belief that intervening won't help, beliefs about the status quo that bullying is normal, and the belief that someone else will intervene) and lack of awareness on the effects bullying can have on victims. As such, the BLP targets these beliefs and offers a different status quo within the classroom. Finally, the BLP considers the theory of planned behavior and the various stages that lead up to actual intention and behavior. Specifically, the BLP targets a bystander's perceptions/attitudes, subjective norms, and intentions to act. However, as group theory suggests, the BLP acknowledges that it may be unwise to expect all peers to openly confront a bully. As such, the BLP offers several alternatives to open confrontation (e.g., telling a teacher, befriending the victim). The BLP uses adults (e.g., researchers and teachers) to deliver these messages due to the influence that adults still have on group norms and dynamics in young children (Hymel et al., 2015).

Finally, while not formally designed as an intergroup contact intervention, research suggests that literature has the ability to support indirect intergroup contact between the in-group and outgroup depending on the narratives and that reading narratives of someone who is like you befriending someone who is different from you can reduce bias and discrimination. As such, this intervention may have also provided some indirect contact benefits to children—as characters of different racial/ethnic



backgrounds and experiences became friends during the stories (Turner & Cameron, 2016).

**Proposed study and program components.** This study examined the effectiveness of an implementation of the Bullying Literature Project (BLP) among third and fourth graders in three Southern California schools. The BLP is a five-session program that uses children's literature (namely *Bullying B.E.A.N.S.*, *Just Kidding*, *The Recess Queen*, *Say Something*, and *The Juice Box Bully*) to facilitate social-emotional and behavioral-change processes. All stories involved characters that model positive ways to solve conflict and engage in bystander interventions. Specifically, the program targeted pro-bully attitudes and beliefs, social-emotional skills (ex. feelings identification and empathy towards the victim), behavioral strategies for peer conflict, and promoting bystander intervention (ex. asking the bully to stop, being a good friend to the victim, and seeking help on behalf of the victim). Sessions were 45 minutes long, and interventionists read a story with students in the classroom, then engaged students in discussion, writing, and role-play activities. The stories were read to students in English, the language of primary instruction within participating schools. The interventionists used scripts for the discussion questions, writing, and role-play activities. *See Table 2 for a summary of each lesson.* The BLP involved six key components which are described in detail below.

**Component 1: Data-based decision making.** Data-based decision making and collaboration with school staff was built into the intervention to promote awareness and encourage school-wide strategies. A pre-intervention survey was given in order to guide bullying prevention in each specific school. Data was collected from students that asked questions such as: "have you been bullied this year?"; "where have you been bullied?";

“how often were you called names, made fun of”, “did they say mean things to you?”; “how often did someone say you couldn’t be a part of their group?”; “how often were you pushed and shoved?”. Parallel questions were also given to teachers (e.g., “Did you ever see a student who was bullied in your school this year?”, “Where was the student bullied?”, “Why do you think the student was bullied?”). Feedback on the survey results were given to teachers and administrators before the first session and school staff were encouraged to provide rewards for using their skills and strategies across the school. One result of the sharing of data was an increase in supervision around identified bullying hot-spots (i.e., recess) which was communicated with teachers, the school psychologist, and the principal. Students received survey feedback during their first session on steps to increase awareness and knowledge about bullying in their schools.

***Component 2: Bibliotherapy.*** Bibliotherapy involves reading a carefully selected book independently or in a group, discussing the story, and applying lessons learned in activities that build on the story’s message. Quality literature invites children to identify with characters, become emotionally invested, express emotions, and apply new insights to personal situations (Pardeck, 1995). However, a review of 76 children’s books on bullying targeted at children 4–11 revealed that while many storybooks contained appropriate coping strategies in response to bullying (including prosocial responses, bystander interventions, and advice seeking), many books (25% of promoted coping strategies) involved revenge-seeking or strategies of tricking, scaring, and retaliation. Distancing (trying to avoid or ignore the bully) was also frequently modeled as a coping strategy (Flanagan et al., 2011). These findings are problematic as research suggests revenge-seeking and distancing strategies can be unproductive coping strategies with

bullies and less effective at preventing future bullying (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Interventionists only chose literature for the BLP that demonstrated appropriate bystander behavior and coping strategies for the main characters. Due to the large ethnic-minority sample, books that had diverse characters were chosen. This intervention is focused on intra-group dynamics between students in the same class and school. As such, this intervention was not formally designed as an extended contact intervention (see discussion in the “role of bibliotherapy in bystander interventions” section above). Specifically, the intervention was not primarily focused on improving intergroup contact between an “in-group” and “out-group” (i.e., providing stories that highlight main characters’ friendship despite differences in ethnicity, gender, nationality, or disability). However, it is possible that stories emulated some indirect intergroup contact, specifically between characters of different ethnicities, and as such, facilitated participant’s attitudes and intentions to befriend and connect with students who are outwardly different than them.

The BLP program used these books in every session. At each session, a book was first read to the class and answers to discussion questions were elicited from the students. Discussion questions were structured based on common social cognitive developmental questions that are asked after moral reasoning vignettes (e.g., Rizzo, Li, Burkholder, & Killen, 2018). Specifically, the discussion questions (a) asked about the behavior of a character (e.g., the bullying, ignoring of the bully) (b) required students to declare attribution of intention/motivation to different participant roles, (c) asked students to evaluate the act as morally right or wrong and why, (d) helped students with perspective-taking on how the actions of others made characters feel and (e) had students reflect on

their own experiences and how that may relate to the narrative. For example, in the book *Say Something*, the narrator describes some of her classmates who are picked on by other kids at school. She doesn't participate in the bullying, but she doesn't stick up for the victims either. One day, she is alone at school and a group of kids pick on her. She grows more upset when she realizes that no one is helping her. The next day, she begins to befriend one of the students that is normally bullied and discovers that she enjoys spending time with her. Discussion questions were then provided to increase student self-reflection and awareness, perspective-taking, empathy, and discuss the bystander role. Example discussion questions included: (a) "How would you feel if you were the narrator? If you were the boy? How do you think the students who were picked on felt?" (perspective-taking; empathy training); (b) "The girls who sits behind her laughs. Why are they laughing? Is it okay to laugh when other students are being made fun of? How does it [laughing] make the girl feel? Why do you think the other kids did not help her? What made the narrator decide to help the kids she saw being picked on?" (focus on bystander role); (c) "Has there ever been a time you felt like you should say something about bullying but didn't? How did it make you feel?" (focus on bystander role) and (d) "Do you think the girls who are laughing are also being bullies even though they are not throwing things and calling her names? Is just laughing okay? Why or why not?"

**Component 3: Writing Activities.** After discussion, the third component of the BLP was introduced. Students were given a writing activity. This activity could be making a bookmark with slogans borrowed from the WITS program (Walk away, Ignore, Talk it out, and Seek help), a cartoon strip with bullying situations, completing stories regarding bullying situations, making a group poster of different strategies to use when

someone is being bullied, or a story booklet of all the strategies being used. This writing component allowed for easier integration into grade-level curriculum demands. For example, common core standards for grade 3 writing includes a) writing narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences, b) establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters, organizing an event sequence that unfolds naturally, and c) the use of dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.

***Component 4: Behavioral Instruction.*** A fourth component of the BLP was behavioral instruction. The interventionists (sometimes with the assistance of the teachers) modeled appropriate behavior for the student and then role played with a student while the group observed. Then, the teacher or researcher encouraged a few students to role play together and then provided performance feedback to students. Feedback involved explicitly identifying the strategies used and praising and reinforcing students' appropriate behavior. Specifically, the interventionists modeled strategies related to bullying, such as the WITS principles, using self-talk ("She is being mean to me BUT she cannot bully me if I do not respond to her. I am just going to walk away and ignore her."), as well as positive bystander behavior (e.g., telling a parent, teacher, showing the victim you care, telling the bully to stop). Examples of role plays that students participated in, included calling someone a name, pushing someone off the swing, and asking someone to do your homework. The difference between good

examples and counter-examples (e.g., crying, pushing back, doing nothing) were also discussed.

***Component 5: Commitment to anti-bullying behavior.*** This component of the BLP targeted positive goal setting by having students aim to use the principles discussed during the BLP. At the end of each lesson students raised their right hand to make a promise to use the strategies learned and help their peers to make their school a safe place during bullying incidents. A promise made in public/in front of others was supposed to aid individuals in keeping that promise compared with when they just make a promise to themselves.

***Component 6: Parent Involvement.*** In their meta-analyses of bullying interventions, Ttofi and Farrington reported that parent involvement was an important program component of effective anti-bullying interventions (2011). The BLP includes a parent/home component that involves (a) encouraging students to share the writing projects they had completed with siblings and parents each week, (b) sending home a parent letter describing the BLP together with parenting strategies to prevent bullying, and also (c) sending a list of recommended books in both English and Spanish for parents to use. Parents were also encouraged to be involved in bullying prevention by reminding children to use the strategies at home.

### **Aims, Research Questions, and Hypotheses**

This study is novel in that it tested bystander theory and bystander intervention effectiveness on a Hispanic-majority sample in order to expand the research base of bystander-related variables and interventions. Three independent aims of the study, with associated research questions and hypotheses, were as follows: Aim 1 was to add to the

exploratory research base of bullying and bystander literature by investigating how variables of interest relate to each other and predict positive bystander behavior.

Independent from Aim 1, Aim 2 was to examine the effectiveness of the BLP as a tool to encourage positive bystander behavior, appropriate attitudes towards bullying, peer relationships, prosocial behavior, and to reduce victimization within elementary school populations. Aim 3 was to determine who the bystander intervention was effective for, in the outcome of positive bystander behavior, by highlighting differing effects for different profiles of participants. This was accomplished by investigating moderators of the intervention effect on positive bystander behavior. I describe research questions and hypotheses related to these three aims in further detail below.

**Research Question 1.** How do the variables of gender, anti-bullying attitudes, prosocial behavior, peer friendships, and victimization relate to each other? How do select variables predict positive bystander behavior?

**Hypothesis 1.1.** Prior research suggests that children nominate girls more than boys as defenders within their classroom (e.g., Menesini et al., 2003; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Juvonen & Salmivalli, 2010). As such, I hypothesized that girls would report more positive bystander behavior compared to boys.

**Hypothesis 1.2.** I hypothesized that when taken together, students' anti-bullying attitudes, prosocial behavior, victimization, and peer friendship would predict a significant amount of variation in student-reports of their own positive bystander behavior. Specifically, each variable in the model would be a significant predictor for positive bystander behavior. Literature suggests that children with anti-bullying attitudes are more likely to be defenders (e.g., Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Pozzoli & Gini, 2012) and

that prosocial behavior (i.e., helping behavior and using social skills) relates to positive bystander behavior (e.g., Jenkins, Demeray, & Tennant, 2017). While a direct connection between victimization and peer friendship has not been identified within the wider bystander literature, these two variables are also expected to be predictors. Victims who have suffered from bullying perpetration may have higher affective empathy and anti-bullying attitudes due their personal experiences—both of which may translate to positive bystander behavior. Students with strong peer friendships (e.g., who are socially secure within the class) may also be more emboldened to intervene during a bullying perpetration compared to their counterparts, who have less strong friendships.

***Hypothesis 1.3.*** I hypothesized that there is a negative correlation between peer friendship and victimization. Several studies have found that peer friendship may be a protective factor in being targeted for victimization (e.g., Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Hodges & Perry, 1999) as socially connected peers make riskier targets. Additionally, victims may also experience internalizing behaviors that can cause them to withdraw from peers (Rigby, 2003), which in turn can exacerbate their risk of victimization.

***Hypothesis 1.4.*** Anti-bullying sentiments typically relate to positive bystander (e.g., Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004), which can be thought of as a complex form of prosocial behavior. Therefore, anti-bullying sentiments may also relate to more general prosocial behaviors, such as being kind to peers and helping those in need in the classroom. As such, I hypothesized that there is a positive correlation between anti-bullying beliefs and teacher-rated prosocial behavior.



**Research Question 2.** Compared to the control group, to what extent does the BLP increase positive bystander behavior, change attitudes and beliefs regarding bullying, increase prosocial behavior as rated by teachers, increase peer-friendship perceptions as rated by students, and reduce student self-reported victimization?

**Hypothesis 2.1.** The BLP increases positive bystander behavior (e.g. helping the victim, seeking help from an adult, telling the bully to stop) as rated by students, compared to the control group.

**Hypothesis 2.2.** The BLP increases anti-bullying attitudes and beliefs as rated by students compared to the control group.

**Hypothesis 2.3.** The BLP increases prosocial behavior (peers act supportive, kind, and helpful to their classmates) as rated by teachers compared to the control group.

**Hypothesis 2.4.** The BLP increases peer-friendship perceptions as rated by students compared to the control group.

**Hypothesis 2.5.** The BLP reduces victimization based on student self-report compared to the control group.

**Research Question 3.** Do gender, level of peer friendships, and anti-bullying attitudes act as moderators for the time-by-condition interaction effect on the outcome of positive bystander behavior?

**Hypothesis 3.1.** The interaction effect of time and condition differs by gender for the outcome of positive bystanding, with boys showing a greater bystander behavior compared to girls as a result of the intervention. Specifically, boys are more likely than girls to show a change in their positive bystander behavior as a result of the intervention

when compared to control, as they are likely to demonstrate lower bystander behavior to begin with, and as such have greater room for improvement.

***Hypothesis 3.2.*** The interaction effect of time by condition on positive bystanding behavior differs by the level of peer friendship present before the onset of the intervention. Students with high peer friendship will increase their positive bystanding behavior as a result of the intervention compared to their counterparts.

***Hypothesis 3.3.*** The interaction effect of time by condition on positive bystanding differs by level of anti-bullying attitudes before the onset of the intervention. Children with high-anti-bullying attitudes at pretest will increase their positive bystander behavior as a result of the intervention compared to their counterparts.

## **Chapter 4: Research Methods and Research Designs**

The data I use here was taken from an archival data set. I was not involved in the data collection process for the intervention. Research methods and research designs are reported based on collaboration with the primary interventionist.

### **Recruitment of Schools and Participants**

Interventionists recruited school principals in the Southern California area to participate in a bullying prevention program. Three schools volunteered (School A, School B, and School C) to participate. None of the schools reported any history of previous bullying prevention programs.

Students from all three schools participated. These schools were majority Hispanic ethnicity. School A and B were public elementary schools with students from Kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. School C was a charter school with students from Kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Specifically, school records indicate School A was 88% Hispanic, 1% Black, 8% White, 1% Asian; School B was 88 % Hispanic, 3% Black, 7% White, 1% Asian; School C was 80% Hispanic, 9% Black, 5% White, and 1% Asian. A majority of students received free or reduced lunch (79-90% of student population across the three schools). The interventionists sent home consent forms (in English and Spanish) to the parents of all third-grade and fourth-grade students and provided teachers with \$30 gift cards for their participation in the study. No incentives were provided to students for their participation in this study. A total of 384 students from 15 classrooms were recruited to participate and 356 students returned consent forms. Classrooms were randomly assigned to treatment condition (n=8) or wait-list control condition (n=7). A total of 195 students

were assigned in the experimental group; and 166 students were assigned in the wait-list control). See *Figure 1* below for a participant flowchart.

### **Interventionists and Intervention Development**

Two graduate students administered the intervention alongside the creator of the Bullying Literature Project (a school psychology faculty member and licensed psychologist) across three schools. When the licensed psychologist was not available, two graduate students administered the intervention together. The intervention team piloted the intervention during spring 2014 school year utilizing two classrooms and four storybooks. Based on teacher feedback, the developers added one more week of intervention, additional role- play activities, and writing activities. The intervention was implemented during the 2014 to 2015 academic school year between October and May. The lessons occurred in the morning, between 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., across different schools and classrooms. The licensed psychologist provided training to interventionists prior to beginning the intervention and provided supervision to interventionists weekly throughout the intervention (at least 30 minutes per week). One interventionist was a Latino American and she translated the parent letter into Spanish for parents as well as suggested children's books in Spanish for parent and children to read at home. Teachers were present during the intervention and were asked to reinforce the behavior in the classroom after each session. Teachers were also in charge of displaying the WITS poster and facilitating the WITS pledge in the classroom. Treatment fidelity was examined using a checklist and was completed by the interventionists. Students and teachers completed paper and pencil measures a week before the intervention started and a week after the intervention concluded.

Figure 1: Participants flow from randomization to posttest Schools A, B, C

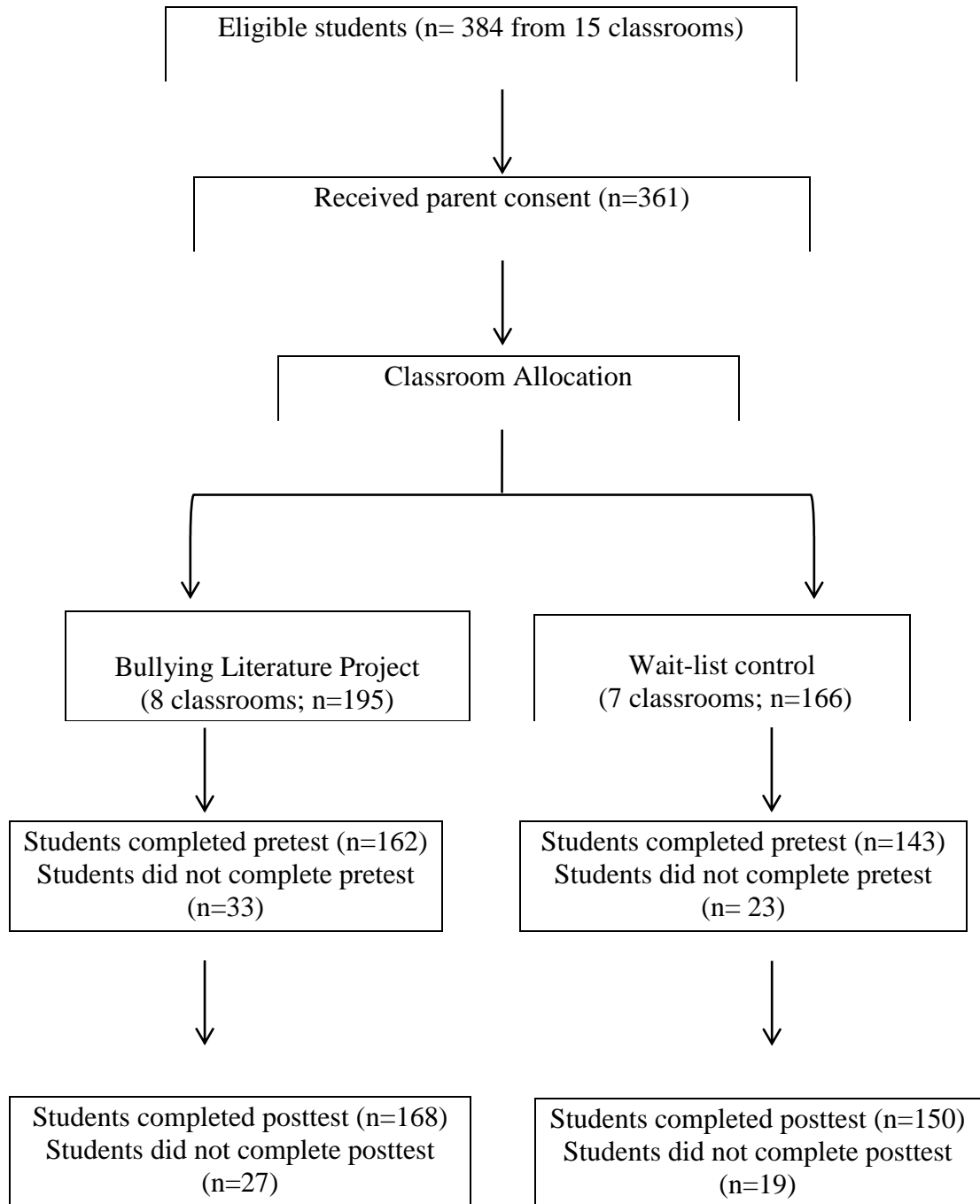


Figure 2: Participants flow from randomization to posttest Schools A+B

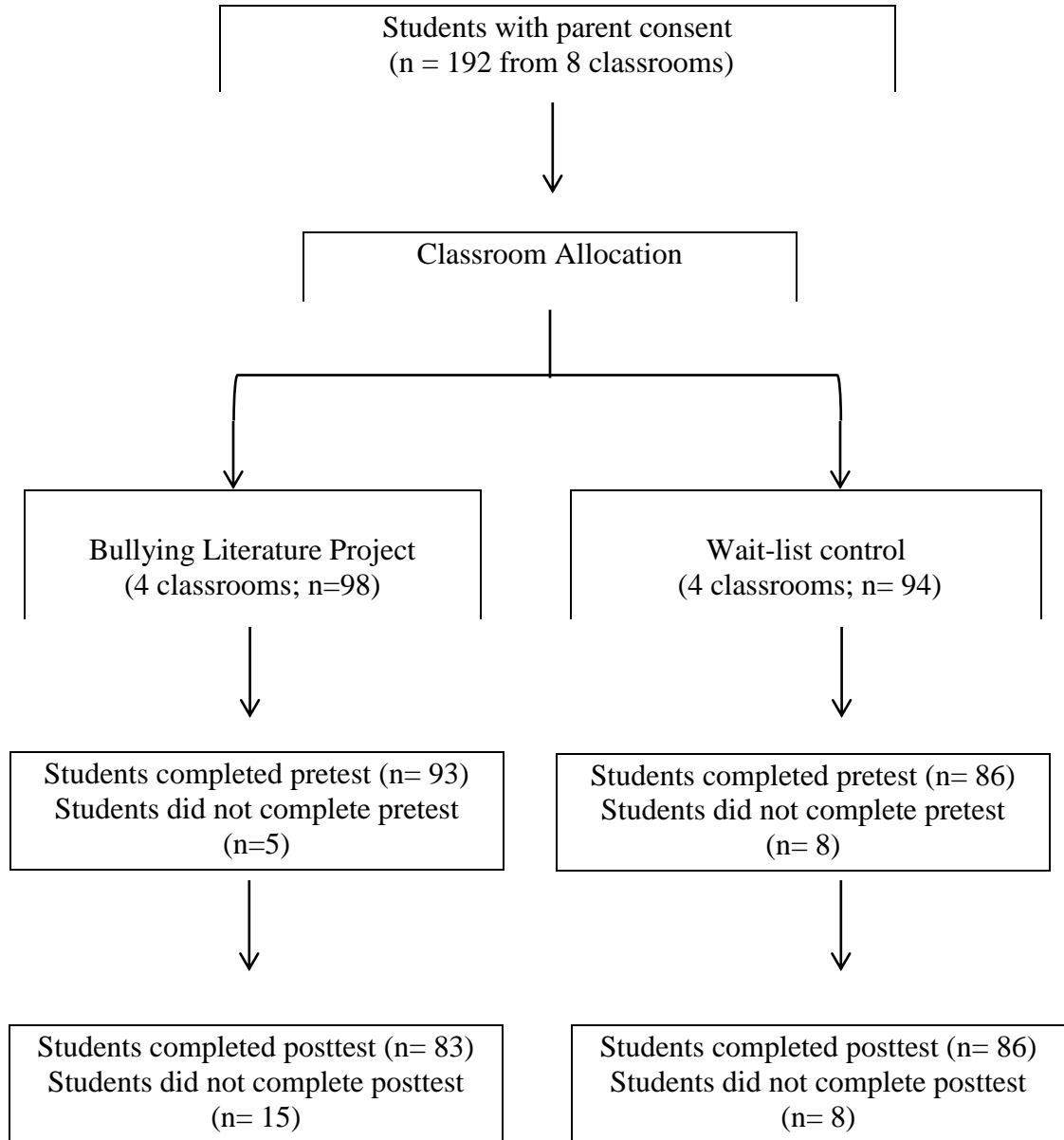
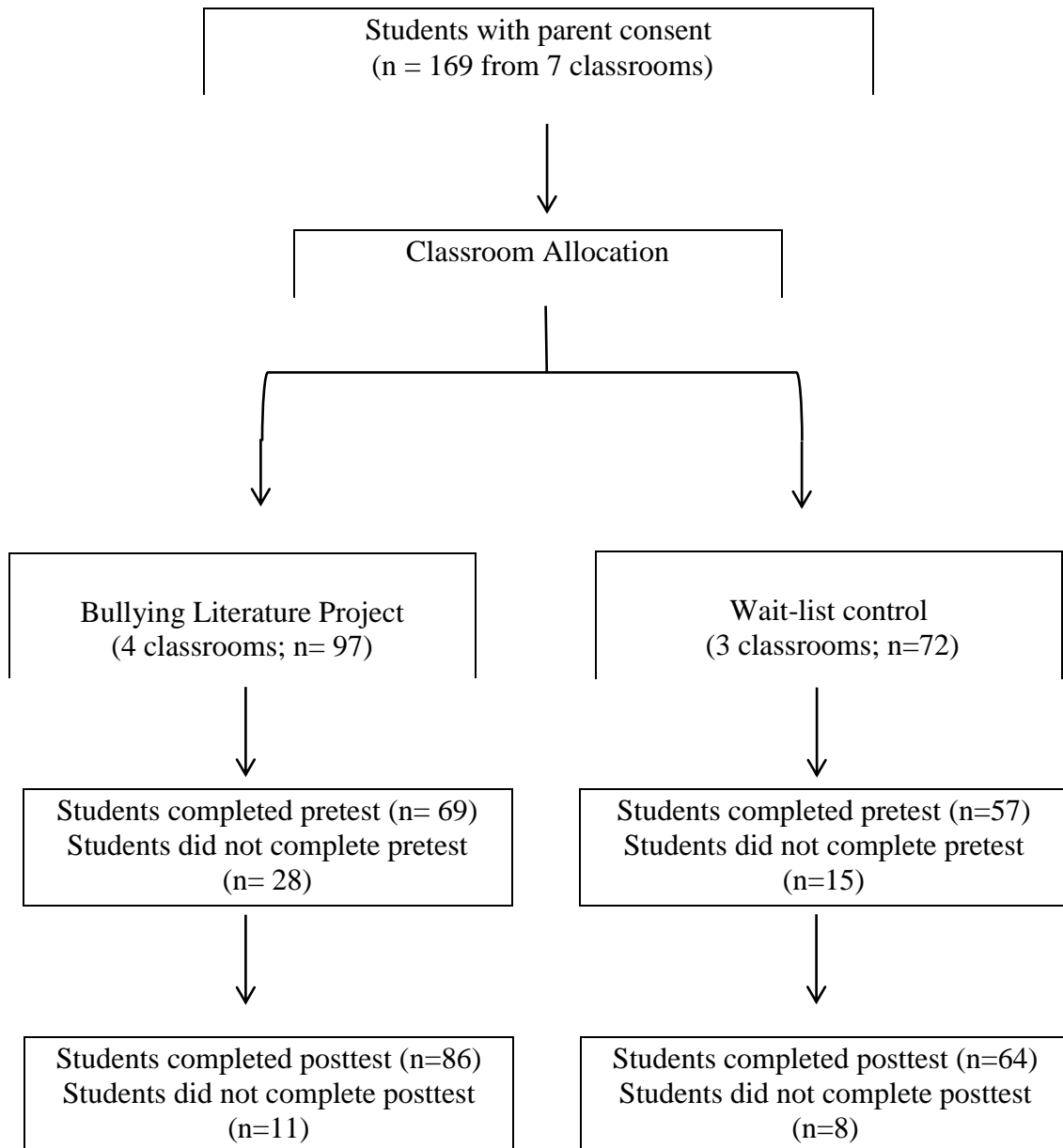


Figure 3: Participants flow from randomization to posttest School C



## **Procedure**

Interventionists used a quasi-experimental pre-post research design. Fifteen classrooms were randomly assigned to either the intervention (eight classrooms) or wait-list control (seven classrooms). In this study, data from the wait-list control classrooms after they participated in the treatment was not included in this study. All classrooms participated in the pretest and posttest surveys. The control classrooms received standard classroom instruction during the intervention period while the treatment classroom received 5 weeks of the BLP intervention. The pretest occurred approximately one week before the start of the intervention, and the posttest was administered the week following the final session of intervention. The teachers of both the control and treatment classrooms also completed pretest and posttest surveys. The measures used are described below.

## **Measures**

Bullying in this measure was defined as: “Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Usually, bullying happens over and over. Examples of bullying are: Punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically. Spreading bad rumors about people. Keeping certain people out of a group. Teasing people in a mean way. Getting certain people to gang up on others.”

**Bystander behavior.** There are few widely used self-report bystander measures created specifically for young children. As such, a measure was created by the interventionists for positive bystander behavior. The bystander behavior scale contained 4



items measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “Never” to “Always.” Students were asked how often they exhibited certain behaviors when they witnessed other students being bullied (i.e., “When you see other kids being bullied, how often did you...”). An exploratory factor analysis suggested a one-factor loading of positive bystander behavior (“tell a parent,” “tell a teacher,” “ask the bully to stop,” “help the victim in other ways”). The internal consistency at pretest was .80 and at posttest was .81.

**Attitudes related to bullying.** A subscale from The Bully Survey—Student Version (BYS-S) was used to examine students’ attitudes towards bullying behaviors (Swearer & Cary, 2003). The original attitudes subscale included 15 items with a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from “Totally False” to “Totally True” to assess attitudes related to bullying. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 15-item measure. A varimax rotation was used as the items were theorized to not be highly correlated with each other. Four items were removed from the scale due to poor loading ( $<.30$ ) or double loading. Results suggested a two-factor loading. The new scale included 11 items—6 items from the anti-bully scale (e.g., “bullies hurt kids” and “bullies make kids feel bad”) and 5 items from the pro-bully scale (e.g., “bullying is good for wimpy kids” and “most kids who get bullied ask for it”). In the current study, only the anti-bully scaled is used. The internal consistency of the anti-bully scale was .80 at pretest and .87 at posttest.

**Pro-social behavior.** Teachers were asked to report on students’ levels of pro-social behavior using the Children’s Social Behavior Scale—Teacher Form (CSBS-TF; Crick, 1996). This four-item, 5-point Likert-type scale (never true, seldom true, sometimes true, often true, and almost always true) included items such as “This child

says supportive things to peers,” and “This child is kind to peers.” This previously validated measure has been found to have high reliability ( $\alpha = .93$ ) and validity (e.g., Crick, 1996). In this current study, the internal consistency at pretest was .95 and at posttest was .97.

**Peer friendship.** Peer friendship was measured with a subscale from the ClassMaps Survey (CMS; Doll et al. 2010). The ClassMaps survey measures students’ perception of the classroom environment. The measure used a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from Never to Always. Children were asked to complete the six-item peer friendships subscale (with the prompt “What was true about your class and your school?”). Sample items include “I have friends that will stick up for me if someone picks on me,” “my friends care about me a lot,” and “I have friends that like me the way I am.” The internal consistency of this scale ranged from .78 to .93 in the original study (Doll et al., 2010), and was .87 at pretest and .88 at posttest for the current investigation.

**Student self-report of victimization.** Student self-report of victimization was assessed using The Verbal and Physical Bullying Scale—Victimization (VPBS; Swearer, Turner, Givens, & Pollack, 2008; Radliff, Wang, & Swearer, 2016). The victimization subscale included 11 questions answered on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = never; 5 = always). Sample questions such as “they called me names” and “they wouldn’t let me be a part of the group” were used to assess verbal and relational victimization, and “they pushed or shoved me” to assess physical victimization. The internal consistency for the VPBS in previous studies ranged from .79 to .89 on the victimization scale (Radliff et al., 2016; Swearer et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2015). The internal consistency for the victimization scale for students in this study was .86 at pretest and .84 at posttest.

**Social validity.** Students and teachers in the treatment classroom completed a social validity scale to assess the acceptability and significance of the intervention. The student social validity scale was assessed using a five item, 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Sample items included “I like the way this intervention was taught,” and “I learned useful skills to improve my interaction with peers.” The teacher social validity scale was assessed using a nine item, 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Sample items included “My students learned useful skills to improve their interaction with peers,” “I liked the way this program was taught,” and “I have noticed a change in my students’ behavior since the program started.” This social validity measure was modified from a social validity scale created by Castro-Olivo (2014). Internal consistency was found to be acceptable ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

**Treatment fidelity.** A checklist was used to assess implementer integrity of the intervention. Different components of the intervention were listed such as “reviewed WITS and asked student if they used WITS,” “introduced the story with opening questions,” “praised student for appropriate answers and for participating,” “modeled the appropriate strategies,” and “completed the planned activities, such as writing and role play.” For each of the five sessions in the treatment classrooms, a trained graduate student in the *BLP* rated intervention components on a 3-point scale (3 = *always*, 2 = *sometimes*, 1 = *never*) based on the treatment providers’ self-rated fidelity to each component (see Appendix B). Intervention sessions were about 45 minutes in length in School A and B. However, due to a time constraint set by School C, each session was only 30-35 minutes in length. The ratings of the interventionists indicated that the

program was completed with fidelity (99.2% for School A and B, 98.4% for School C) with “sometimes” or “always” coded as 1 and “never” coded as 0 (although in general, interventionists typically indicated that they “always” completed the intervention with fidelity).

### **Data Analytic Plan**

Aim 1 focused on adding to the theoretical research base of bullying and bystander literature by investigating how variables of interest relate to each other and predict positive bystander behavior. Aim 1 was independent of Aim 2 and Aim 3 (which were focused on intervention effects). As such, the relationships between the variables investigated in Aim 1 were not expected to have an impact on intervention effects related to Aim 2 and Aim 3. A summary of statistical analysis is provided below. Details of statistical analysis choices are provided in the proceeding sections.

Aim 1 was concerned with characteristics of the dataset at baseline. As such, only pretest data was used to investigate Aim 1. Descriptive statistics will be run on the data using SPSS for age, gender, and the outcome variables. As part of the exploratory analysis, zero order correlations were run between all variables as well. Additionally, t-tests were used to identify differences between gender and grade on the outcomes of antibullying attitudes, peer friendships, victimization, teacher-rated prosocial behavior. Formal hypotheses utilized a t-test to investigate differences in gender for positive bystander behavior (hypothesis 1.1), a simultaneous linear regression using antibullying attitudes, prosocial behavior, victimization, and peer friendship to predict the outcome of positive bystander behavior (hypothesis 1.2), and zero order correlations to investigate

the correlation between peer friendship and victimization (hypothesis 1.3) and antibullying beliefs and teacher-rated prosocial behavior (hypothesis 1.4).

Aim 2 focused on the effectiveness of the BLP intervention on the outcomes of positive bystanding behavior, attitudes towards bullying, peer relationships, prosocial behavior, and victimization. The total data set consisted of 3 schools and 15 classrooms, and involved nested data. Individual intraclass correlations (ICC) were calculated for school and classroom groupings, in order to investigate the impact of these groupings on the level of variation in each independent variable. While multi-level model analyses are common when dealing with nested data, multi-level model analyses was not feasible for this data set for several reasons. Firstly, level 2 would have only had 15 units (i.e., classrooms) in the multi-level model, which is considered a small N and can lead to biased and inaccurate estimates of the regression coefficients, the variance components, and the standard errors (Maas & Hox, 2005). Additionally, further investigation into the data set revealed there were key structural and implementation differences across schools (see *Splitting the dataset* subsection). Finally, School C had more missing data compared to School A and B. As such, separate, but parallel, statistical analyses were run for Schools A and B and School C using a repeated measures, mixed ANOVA statistical analyses to determine differences between the control and experimental groups across outcomes of interest. Additionally, after splitting the dataset, the ICC's supported low variance at the classroom level across a majority of the variables of interest (see *Intraclass correlations* subsection).

Aim 3 was to determine who the bystander intervention was effective for in terms of the outcome of positive bystander behavior. A three-way mixed ANOVA was utilized

to investigate moderator effects of gender, level of peer friendships, and level of antibullying attitudes on the time by condition interaction for the outcome of positive bystander behavior. These moderators were only tested in Schools A and B as it was a more complete data set. The “level of peer friendship” and “level of antibullying attitudes” variables were calculated by a split across their median scores in order to make them dichotomous variables.

### **Exploratory Analysis**

Exploratory analysis was run in SPSS for grade and gender. The total sample had  $n = 188$  males and  $n = 159$  females (fourteen cases missing). A total of  $n = 176$  participants were third graders and  $n = 185$  participants were fourth graders. Due to implementation and structural differences across schools, the full data set (Schools A, B, and C) is only used to answer exploratory research questions (i.e., Research Question 1). Research questions pertaining to the intervention effectiveness (Research Questions 2 and Research Questions 3) investigate outcomes from School A and B and School C separately. Further explanation is below.

**Splitting the dataset.** While treatment fidelity data was similar across all three schools (99.2% in School A and B and 98.4% in School C) and similar content was covered, interventionists reported that implementation in School C differed from School A and School B due to time constraints. Specifically, interventionists spent at least 45 minutes presenting lessons in Schools A and B (the intervention was designed to be completed in 45 minutes). In contrast, only 30-35 minutes were spent presenting the lessons in School C. Essentially, this led to less time for discussion, role-play, and interactive elements of the intervention. Secondly, School C was structurally dissimilar

from Schools A and B. Schools A and B were both public elementary schools that housed K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade, while School C was a charter school that housed students K-8<sup>th</sup> grade. Thirdly, School C presented as a less complete data set and exceeded 25% missing data across several variables (specifically, peer friendship pretest, victimization pretest, anti-bullying attitudes pretest; See *Table 2*). Due to these implementation and structural differences between schools, I decided to divide the data set between Schools A and B and School C when investigating questions about the effectiveness of the BLP intervention.

**Intraclass correlations.** Due to data being nested across various schools and classrooms (see *Table 1*), intra class correlations on the full data set (Schools A, B, and C) were calculated to determine if the variation in observed responses for bystander behavior, attitudes, prosocial behavior, peer friendships, and self-reported victimization was over-influenced by school or classroom membership. “Low” ICC (e.g., close to zero) indicates that the variation in observed response stems from individual differences within groups and suggests using a traditional mixed ANOVA model would be appropriate. However, “high” ICC (i.e., a two-digit percentage) indicates that it may be necessary to use multilevel modeling to take into account how bystander behavior, attitudes, prosocial behavior, peer friendships, and self-reported victimization could be influenced by school or classroom membership.

Table 1

*Student Frequency by School and Classroom*

School	Classroom	Student
A	A1	21
	A2	18
	A3	19
	A4	22
		N = 80
B	B1	24
	B2	30
	B3	31
	B4	26
		N = 111
C	C1	23
	C2	24
	C3	24
	C4	23
	C5	23
	C6	26
	C7	22
		N = 165

The intraclass correlation can be estimated from the mean square in the ANOVA table. Due to unequal student sample sizes within schools, an unbalanced ANOVA was used to determine the ICC using the following formula as the ICC estimate:

$$ICC = \frac{MS_B - MS_W}{MS_B + (n' - 1)MS_W}$$

Where the quantity  $n'$  is estimated by the formula below:

$$n' = \frac{1}{n - 1} \left[ \sum_{i=1}^n n_i - \sum_{i=1}^n n_i^2 / \sum_{i=1}^n n_i \right]$$

Where  $n$  is the number of sampled schools, and  $n_i$  is the number of sampled students in school “ $i$ ”. This quantity can be interpreted as the average  $n_i$  in the case of an



unbalanced one-way, random effects ANOVA.

ICCs that are close to zero suggest a negligible effect of variance accounted for by the independent variable (e.g., school or classroom). Results of the ICC indicated that the school the child attended did not have a significant effect on ratings for variables of interest, with notable exceptions (see *Table 2*). Exceptions were the positive bystanding pretest at the level of school and classroom, which showed an ICC of .15 and .21 respectively. This indicates 15 % of the variance in positive bystanding at pretest was accounted for by the school the child attended and 21% of the variance in positive bystander behavior at pretest was accounted for by the classroom they attended. Prosocial behavior subtest was also influenced by classroom at pretest, with 33% of the variance in prosocial behavior accounted for by teacher ratings. There may be several contributing factors to these cluster effects found. Prosocial behavior was the only measure completed by teachers, who rated participating children in their classrooms. As such, the classroom level accounting for high variance may be expected compared to other measures that had students rate their own behaviors or attitudes.

After splitting the dataset, ICC results supported lower variability related to classroom cluster effects in Schools A and B compared to School C. Overall, for Schools A and B, the ICCs indicated that neither school nor classroom accounted for a large amount of variance for the variables of interest. Overall, data provides some support for the use of an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression as an appropriate statistical analysis, as the nested nature of the data did not seem to interfere with variation of scores in a majority of outcome measures in Schools A and B. In contrast, School C had high amount of variance for positive bystander behavior (ICC = .24) and antibullying attitudes

(ICC = .16) anti-bullying. As such, there is limited interpretability of these variables within the School C data set (see *Table 2* for ICC values across variables of interest for combined data set, Schools A and B, and School C).

Table 2

*Intraclass Correlation Coefficients*

Scale	All Schools Combined		School A+B		School C
	ICC: School	ICC: Class	ICC: School	ICC: Class	ICC: Class
Positive bystanding Pretest	.15	.21	.01	.07	.16
Anti-bullying Attitudes Pretest	.03	.13	.04	.07	.24
Prosocial Behavior Pretest	.03	.33	.03	.12	.09
Peer Friendship Pretest	.02	.02	.00	.05	.04
Victimization Pretest	.05	.08	.00	.09	.00

**Descriptive Statistics.** Descriptive statistics for the main constructs and their respective measures, including means, standard deviations, and ranges, are summarized in *Table 3* for Schools A and B (combined). The sample included 105 males and 85 females (two cases were missing gender denotation). The sample included 81 third graders and 111 fourth graders. In Schools A+B, positive bystander behavior and victimization variables had a positive skew while anti-bullying attitudes, prosocial behavior, and peer friendships had a negative skew. No variables showed skew statistics outside of what is considered normal ( $\pm 2.0$ ; Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn) with the exception of the pretest victimization scores in the control group. The student-rated social validity score was moderate ( $M=3.69$ ; Potential range was 1.00-5.00). Teacher-rated social

validity (not shown in Table 3) was high ( $M = 5.05$ ; Potential range was 1.00-6.00).

However, only two out of four teachers completed the social validity measure in Schools A and B. Notably, descriptive statistics revealed missing data. In these cases, the average composite score could not be completed either due to participant attrition or due to the participant failing to answer more than 80% of the items that composed the composite score. Overall, less than 12% of cases were missing across a majority of variables with some exceptions. Namely, anti-bullying attitudes (posttest experimental group; 16%), peer friendship (posttest experimental group; 16%), victimization (posttest experimental group; 15%), and student social validity (18%) had higher rates of missing cases in comparison. Importantly, prosocial behavior at pretest for the control group had the highest level of missing data (23.4%). This is because one teacher did not return their pretest ratings.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics: Schools A+B*

	<i>n</i>	<i>Missing</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range		<i>Skew</i>
					Actual	Pot.	
Positive Bystander T1							
Control	88	6	2.02	1.15	1-5	1-5	.88
Experimental	96	2	2.23	1.13	1-5	1-5	.68
Positive Bystander T2							
Control	88	6	2.16	1.25	1-5	1-5	.81
Experimental	87	11	2.77	1.32	1-5	1-5	.28
Anti-bullying Att. T1							
Control	88	6	3.86	1.15	1-5	1-5	-1.38
Experimental	93	5	3.91	.96	1-5	1-5	-1.35
Anti-bullying Att. T2							
Control	86	8	4.01	1.15	1-5	1-5	-1.71
Experimental	82	16	4.00	1.05	1-5	1-5	-1.67

Prosocial Behavior T1								
Control	72	5	3.94	.89	2-5	1-5	-.33	
Experimental	95	4	3.60	.81	1.25-5	1-5	-.32	
Prosocial Behavior T2								
Control	93	9	3.86	1.10	1-5	1-5	-.43	
Experimental	94	16	3.83	.94	1.5-5	1-5	-.58	
Peer Friendships T1								
Control	89	9	3.41	.78	1-4	1-4	-1.54	
Experimental	94	16	3.27	.71	1-4	1-4	-1.00	
Peer Friendships T2								
Control	85	9	3.29	.86	1-4	1-4	-1.42	
Experimental	82	16	3.20	.85	1-4	1-4	-.93	
Victimization T1								
Control	86	8	1.31	.50	1-3.45	1-5	2.00	
Experimental	93	5	1.51	.64	1-4.27	1-5	1.80	
Victimization T2								
Control	86	8	1.44	.57	1-3.27	1-5	1.40	
Experimental	83	15	1.58	.71	1-4.6	1-5	1.71	
Social Valid. Students	80	18	3.69	.49	1.20-4	1-5	-2.43	

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In School C, descriptive statistics for the main constructs and their respective measures, including means, standard deviations, and ranges, are summarized in *Table 4*. The sample included 83 males and 74 females (twelve cases missing) and 91 third graders and 78 fourth graders. Victimization variables had a positive skew while anti-bullying attitudes, prosocial behavior at posttest, and peer friendships had a negative skew. Other variables had a small positive skew at pretest and a small negative skew at posttest (i.e., prosocial behavior experimental group). Select variables had skew values outside of what is considered normal ( $\pm 2.0$ ; Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn). Notably, the anti-bullying attitudes at posttest for the experimental group showed a large negative skew. Student-rated social validity ( $M=3.31$ ; Potential range was 1.00-5.00) and teacher-rated social validity (not shown in Table 4) was moderate ( $M= 4.23$ ; Potential range was 1.00

to 6.00). However, only two out of four teachers completed the social validity measure in School C. Overall, school C was a less complete data set compared to Schools A and B. Across several variables in the control group, missing data exceed 25% (e.g., peer friendship pretest, victimization pretest, and anti-bullying attitudes pretest). Additionally, administration of the intervention varied with school C. Interventionists only spent 30-35 minutes presenting the lessons while in Schools A and B, interventionists spent 45 minutes. As such, these schools were analyzed separately when results concerned intervention effects (i.e., research questions 2 and 3).

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics: Schools C*

	<i>n</i>	<i>Missing</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range		<i>Skew</i>
					Actual	Pot.	
Positive Bystander T1							
Control	66	6	2.96	1.41	1-5	1-5	-.02
Experimental	83	14	3.03	1.27	1-5	1-5	-.01
Positive Bystander T2							
Control	67	5	3.04	1.14	1-5	1-5	-.34
Experimental	87	10	2.94	1.35	1-5	1-5	-.02
Anti-bullying Attitudes T1							
Control	59	13	4.20	.82	1-5	1-5	-1.67
Experimental	53	44	3.58	1.31	1-5	1-5	-.68
Anti-bullying Attitudes T2							
Control	64	8	4.25	.65	1-5	1-5	-.84
Experimental	84	13	4.15	1.04	1-5	1-5	-2.01
Prosocial Behavior T1							
Control	72	0	3.61	.95	1-5	1-5	-.60
Experimental	94	3	3.57	.85	1.5-5	1-5	.08
Prosocial Behavior T2							

Control	72	0	3.38	1.13	1-5	1-5	-.47
Experimental	86	11	4.07	.79	2-5	1-5	-.37
Peer Friendships T1							
Control	58	14	3.23	.82	1-4	1-4	-1.30
Experimental	56	41	3.05	.80	1-4	1-4	-.80
Peer Friendships T2							
Control	66	6	3.46	.69	1.30-4	1-4	-1.54
Experimental	84	13	3.19	.88	1-4	1-4	-1.12
Victimization T1							
Control	59	13	1.78	.79	1-4	1-5	1.01
Experimental	70	27	1.68	.61	1-3.63	1-5	.99
Victimization T2							
Control	64	8	1.75	.69	1-3.36	1-5	.68
Experimental	86	11	1.63	.65	1-4.11	1-5	1.39
Social Valid. Students	35	62	3.31	.92	1-4	1-5	-1.53

## **Chapter 5: Results**

### **Prevalence**

Data from the archival data set (Schools A, B, and C) at pretest suggest 17.4 % percent of the sample reported being victimized at least once during the school year. These prevalence scores were calculated using pretest ratings of victimization, where students were asked how often they experienced being bullied as a victim. Responses ranged from a five-point Likert scale of “never” to “always.” At the time of data collection, school was in session for 2-3 months.

### **Grade and Gender Differences**

A t-test was conducted to compare scores of positive bystanding, anti-bullying attitudes, peer friendship, victimization, and prosocial behavior for grade (third and fourth graders) and gender (male and female) across Schools A, B, and C. There was a significant difference in scores for positive bystander behavior of fourth graders ( $M=2.72$ ;  $SD = 1.33$ ) and third graders ( $M= 2.31$ ;  $SD = 1.24$ );  $t(322) = -2.89$ ,  $p = .004$ . There was a significant difference in scores of anti-bullying attitudes of fourth graders ( $M = 4.10$ ;  $SD=.94$ ) and third graders ( $M = 3.65$ ;  $SD = 1.19$ );  $t(291) = -3.61$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was a significant difference in scores of teacher-rated prosocial behavior of fourth graders ( $M=3.83$ ;  $SD =.86$ ) and third graders ( $M=3.46$ ;  $SD = .92$ );  $t(329) = -3.72$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was not a significant difference in scores for peer friendship of fourth graders ( $M=3.29$ ,  $SD = .74$ ) and third graders ( $M=3.22$ ;  $SD = .87$ );  $t(296) = -.69$ ,  $p = .489$ ). There was not a significant difference in scores of victimization of fourth graders ( $M=1.49$ ;  $SD = .60$ ) and third graders ( $M=1.60$ ;  $SD = .70$ );  $t(307) = 1.56$ ,  $p = .119$ ).

Results indicated there was not a significant difference in scores of positive bystander behavior for male ( $M=2.53$ ;  $SD = 1.35$ ) and female ( $M=2.53$ ;  $SD = 1.24$ );  $t(324) = -.02$ ,  $p = .985$ . There was a significant difference in anti-bullying attitudes between females ( $M=4.06$ ;  $SD = .92$ ) and males ( $M= 3.79$ ;  $SD = 1.16$ );  $t(288) = -2.20$ ,  $p = .029$ . There was a significant difference in peer friendship between females ( $M=3.38$ ;  $SD = .77$ ) and males ( $M=3.15$ ;  $SD = .80$ );  $t(294) = -2.42$ ,  $p = .016$ . There was no significant difference in victimization between females ( $M=1.53$ ;  $SD = .63$ ) and males ( $M= 1.55$ ;  $SD = .67$ );  $t(300) = .244$ ,  $p = .807$ . There was a significant difference in teacher-rated prosocial behavior between females ( $M=3.85$ ;  $SD = .92$ ) and males ( $M=3.51$ ;  $SD = .87$ ),  $t(317) = -3.408$ ,  $p = .001$ .

### **Research Question 1**

Research question 1 asked how the variables of gender, anti-bullying attitudes, prosocial behavior, peer friendships and victimization relate to each other and how do select variables predict positive bystander behavior? This question concerns delineating the theoretical link between these constructs and is independent from Research Questions 2 and 3. Results are reported in *Table 5 and Table 6*. Data was taken from Schools A, B, and C.

**Hypothesis 1.1.** Hypothesis 1.1 predicted that girls would report more positive bystander behavior compared to boys. Results indicated there was not a significant difference in scores of positive bystander behavior for boys ( $M=2.53$ ;  $SD = 1.35$ ) and girls ( $M=2.53$ ;  $SD = 1.24$ );  $t(324) = -.02$ ,  $p = .985$ . Hypothesis 1.1 was not supported.

**Hypothesis 1.2.** Hypothesis 1.2 stated that when taken together, students' anti-bullying attitudes, prosocial behavior, victimization, and peer friendship would predict a



significant amount of variation in student-reports of their own positive bystander behavior. Additionally, each variable would be a significant predictor for positive bystanding. Prior to conducting a multiple regression, the relevant assumptions of this statistical analysis were tested. The assumption of linearity was tested using the partial scatterplot of the independent variables (anti-bullying attitudes, prosocial behavior, peer friendships, and victimization) and the dependent variable (positive bystander behavior). The assumption of independence and homogeneity was tested using studentized residuals against values of the independent variables and studentized residuals against predicted values. A relatively random display of residual points, that were spread fairly constant over the range of values of the independent variables, provided evidence that the assumptions of independence and homogeneity of variance were met. The assumption of normality was tested by reviewing a histogram plot of standardized residuals for positive bystanding and skewness (.594), and kurtosis (-.359) statistics. Finally, the assumption of collinearity was tested using collinearity statistics, which were all within accepted limits (e.g., tolerance was greater than .10 and the variance inflation factor was less than 10 across independent variables). An evaluation of Cooke's distance scores indicated no individual case had a large influence on the model (Cook's distance = .100; values greater than 1 suggest a case may be problematic).

Hypothesis 1.2 was partially supported. A simultaneous multiple regression was used, where anti-bullying attitudes, teacher-rated prosocial behavior, victimization, and peer friendship were all entered simultaneously. Results of the multiple regression analysis revealed that these variables accounted for 13.8% of the variance in positive bystander behavior ( $F \text{ Change } (4, 263) = 10.51 \text{ } p < .001$ ). However, only anti-bullying

attitudes and victimization were significant predictors in the model. That is, the unstandardized partial slope (.301) and standardized slope (.250) were statistically different from 0 ( $t = 4.19$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ ) for anti-bullying attitudes and the unstandardized partial slope (.536) and standardized slope (.268) were statistically different from 0 for victimization ( $t=4.60$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ ). See Table 5.

Table 5

*Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Positive Bystanding Behavior from Anti-Bullying Attitudes, Teacher-rated Prosocial Behavior, Victimization, and Peer Friendship*

Predictor	Positive Bystander Behavior	
	Total $R^2$	$\beta$
Step 1	.138	
Anti-bullying Att		.301***
Prosocial Behavior		-.040
Victimization		.536***
Peer Friendship		.078

Note. N= 154

\*\*\* $p < .001$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*  $p < .05$ .

**Hypothesis 1.3.** Hypothesis 1.3 predicted a negative correlation between peer friendship and victimization. Hypothesis 1.3 was supported. A Pearson correlation between peer friendship and victimization showed a small, negative, significant correlation,  $r(270) = -.13$ ,  $p = .027$ .

**Hypothesis 1.4.** Hypothesis 1.4 predicted a positive correlation between anti-bullying beliefs and teacher-rated prosocial behavior. Hypothesis 1.4 was not supported. A Pearson correlation between anti-bullying beliefs and teacher-rated prosocial behavior showed a non-significant, positive correlation,  $r(268) = .11$ ,  $p = .067$ .

While not formal research questions, other significant correlations emerged from within the dataset. Peer friendship showed a small positive correlation with anti-bullying attitudes,  $r(290) = .26, p < .001$ , and victimization showed a small, negative correlation with prosocial behavior,  $r(270) = -.13, p = .036$ . See Table 5 for a correlation matrix of select variables.

Table 6

*Pearson Correlations between Variables*

	Pos.Byst	Antibully	Prosocial	Peer Friend	Victimiz
Pos. Byst	1.00	.26***	-.03	.08	.26***
Antibully	.26***	1.00	.11	.26***	-.02
Prosocial	-.03	.11	1.00	.03	-.13*
Peer Friend	.08	.26***	.03	1.00	-.13*
Victimiz	.26***	-.02	-.13*	-.13*	1.00

\*\*\*. Correlation is significant at the .001 level (2-tailed)

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

\*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

## Research Question 2

Research question 2 asked to what extent does the BLP increase positive bystander behavior, change attitudes and beliefs regarding bullying, increase prosocial behavior as rated by teachers, increase peer friendship perceptions as rated by students, and reduce student self-reported victimization, compared to the wait-list control group. (This research question is independent from theoretically-driven analysis in Research Question1). Prior to conducting a mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) to establish the treatment's effect over time, the relevant assumptions of this statistical analysis were tested for schools A and B (combined), and School C (separately). The first assumption

for mixed ANOVA was met because all dependent variables were measured on a continuous scale (i.e., Likert scales). The second assumption that the within-subjects factor consists of at least two categorical “related groups” or “matched pairs” was also satisfied. In the mixed ANOVA, data was collected from the same subjects at two separate time points (i.e., pretest and posttest). The third assumption, that the between-subjects factor consists of at least two categorical independent groups, was also satisfied, as subjects either belonged to the intervention or control group. The fourth assumption that there should be no significant outliers (i.e.,  $\pm 2SD$ ) in any group of the within-subjects or between-subjects factor was checked by examining the box-and-whisker plots for each dependent variable. In Schools A+B, no outliers were present in either the control or intervention group for positive bystander behavior or teacher-rated prosocial behavior in either pretest or posttest scores. Additionally, no outliers were noted in the experimental group for pretest and posttest peer friendship scores. However, in the control group for the variable of peer friendship, outlier cases included students who “never” had positive peer friendships (i.e. four outliers for pretest control group and five outliers for posttest control group) due to a ceiling effect of a majority of students reporting they “almost always” had positive peer friendship interactions. In contrast, outliers existed for victimization due to a floor effect (some outlier students reporting that they “sometimes” are victimized among a majority of students reporting that they “never” are victimized; five outliers in the control group pretest, two outliers in the control group posttest, four outliers in the experimental group pretest and four outliers in the experimental group posttest for victimization). Outliers also existed for anti-bullying attitudes due to some students reporting “totally false” or “sometimes false” among a

majority of participants reporting that bullies harming kids is “sort of true” (six outlier cases in the control group pretest, seven outlier cases in the experimental group posttest, five outlier cases in the control group posttest, and six outlier cases in the experimental group posttest).

Within School C no outliers were present for the positive bystander variable across pretest and posttest in the experimental or control group. There were four outliers at pretest and posttest for peer friendship variable in the control group (a majority of participants reported “often” having positive peer friendships and outliers reported “never” having positive peer friendships) and no outliers for the experimental group at pretest). There were no outliers for the experimental group at pretest or posttest for the variable of peer friendship. Anti-bullying attitudes also demonstrated a ceiling effect, with a majority of participants reporting that it was “sort of true” that bullying harms others, while outliers reported it was “totally false” (one outlier in the control pretest and four outliers in experimental posttest for anti-bullying attitudes). The variable of prosocial behavior also experienced a ceiling effect, with most teachers reporting high prosocial behavior and outliers involving students where prosocial behavior was “never true” (two outliers in the control at pretest and four outliers in the control group at posttest). In contrast, students reported a floor effect for victimization, with outlier cases involving students responding that victimization “always” occurred to another student (one outlier in experimental group at pretest, four outliers in experimental group posttest).

The assumption of normality was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk statistic, Q-Q plots, and histograms. None of the variables showed acceptable normality statistics. However, according to Lomax & Hahs Vuaghn, (2012) in a two-factor mixed-effects

model there is minimal effects to violation of the normality assumption when there is equal or nearly equal Ns. In contrast, when Ns are not roughly equal violations in normality can have substantial effects. Within Schools A and B (combined) the assumption of normality was not met for each combination (within-and between-subject factors) of the positive bystander dependent variable, Shapiro-Wilk ( $W$ ) = 0.83,  $p < .001$  for the pretest control group,  $W = 0.90$ ,  $p < .001$  for the pretest intervention group,  $W = 0.84$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest control group, and  $W = 0.93$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest intervention group. Data points fell roughly along the normal distribution line on the normal Q-Q plots however the histograms were negatively skewed.

In schools A and B, the assumption of normality was not met for each combination of the anti-bullying attitudes,  $W = 0.80$ ,  $p < .001$  for the pretest control group,  $W = 0.88$ ,  $p < .001$  for the pretest intervention group,  $W = 0.74$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest control group, and  $W = 0.80$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest intervention group. The data points did not fall along the normal distribution line on the normal Q-Q plots, and the histograms revealed that the data was positively skewed.

The assumption of normality was not met for each combination of the prosocial behavior dependent variable:  $W = 0.91$ ,  $p < .001$  for the pretest control group,  $W = 0.96$ ,  $p = .013$  for the pretest intervention group,  $W = 0.79$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest control group, and  $W = 0.92$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest intervention group. Data points fell along the normal distribution line on the normal Q-Q plots for the control and experimental group however the histograms did not reflect a normal distribution.

The assumption of normality was not met for each combination of the peer friendship dependent variable,  $W = 0.77$ ,  $p < .001$  for the pretest control group,  $W = 0.88$ ,

$p < .001$  for the pretest intervention group,  $W = 0.79$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest control group, and  $W = 0.85$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest intervention group. The data points did not fall along the normal distribution line on the normal Q-Q plots and the histograms revealed that the data was positively skewed.

The assumption of normality was not met for each combination of the victimization dependent variable,  $W = 0.70$ ,  $p < .001$  for the pretest control group,  $W = 0.77$ ,  $p < .001$  for the pretest intervention group,  $W = 0.78$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest control group, and  $W = 0.80$ ,  $p < .001$ . The data points did not fall along the normal distribution line on the normal Q-Q plots. The histogram revealed that the data was negatively skewed.

In school C, the assumption of normality was not met for each combination of the positive bystander variable,  $W = 0.91$ ,  $p < .001$  for the pretest control group,  $W = 0.94$ ,  $p < .001$  for the pretest intervention group,  $W = 0.95$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest control group, and  $W = 0.92$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest intervention group. The data points fell along the normal distribution line on the normal Q-Q plots, however the histograms revealed a non-normal (multi-modal) distribution of data.

The assumption of normality was not met for each combination of the anti-bullying dependent variable,  $W = 0.84$ ,  $p < .001$  for the pretest control group,  $W = 0.88$ ,  $p < .001$  for the pretest intervention group,  $W = 0.92$ ,  $p = .001$  for the posttest control group, and  $W = 0.71$ ,  $p < .001$  for the posttest intervention group. The data points did not fall along the normal distribution line on the normal Q-Q plots. The histogram revealed that the data was positively skewed.

The assumption of normality was not met for each combination of the prosocial behavior dependent variable ( $W = 0.93, p < .001$  for the pretest control group,  $W = 0.89, p < .001$  for the pretest intervention group,  $W = 0.93, p < .001$  for the posttest control group, and  $W = 0.87, p < .001$  for the posttest intervention group). The data points fell along the normal distribution line on the normal Q-Q plots. However, the histogram revealed that the data was positively skewed.

The assumption of normality was not met for each combination of the peer friendship behavior dependent variable ( $W = 0.83, p < .001$  for the pretest control group,  $W = 0.88, p < .001$  for the pretest intervention group,  $W = 0.78, p < .001$  for the posttest control group, and  $W = 0.84, p < .001$  for the posttest intervention group). The data points did fall roughly along the normal distribution line on the normal Q-Q plots. However, the histogram revealed that the data was positively skewed.

The assumption of normality was not met for each combination of the victimization dependent variable ( $W = 0.88, p < .001$  for the pretest control group,  $W = 0.91, p < .001$  for the pretest intervention group,  $W = 0.90, p < .001$  for the posttest control group, and  $W = 0.86, p < .001$  for the posttest intervention group). The data points did not fall along normal distribution line on the normal Q-Q plots and the histogram revealed that the data were negatively skewed.

The assumption of homogeneity of variance for each dependent variable was checked using Levene's Test in Schools A and B (combined data). Positive bystander pretest and posttest score variances were homogenous,  $F(1, 166) = 0.01, p = 0.944$  and  $F(1, 166) = 1.00, p = 0.318$ , respectively. Anti-bullying attitudes pretest and posttest score variances were homogenous,  $F(1, 157) = .665, p = 0.416$  and  $F(1, 157) = 0.002, p =$



0.967. Prosocial pretest and posttest score variances were homogenous,  $F(1, 162) = .086$ ,  $p = 0.769$  and  $F(1, 162) = .200$ ,  $p = 0.655$ . Peer Friendship pretest and posttest score variances were homogenous,  $F(1, 158) = .143$ ,  $p = 0.706$  and  $F(1, 158) = .555$ ,  $p = 0.458$ . Victimization pretest score variances were not homogenous,  $F(1, 156) = 6.717$ ,  $p = .010$  but posttest score variances were homogenous  $F(1, 156) = 1.894$ ,  $p = .171$ .

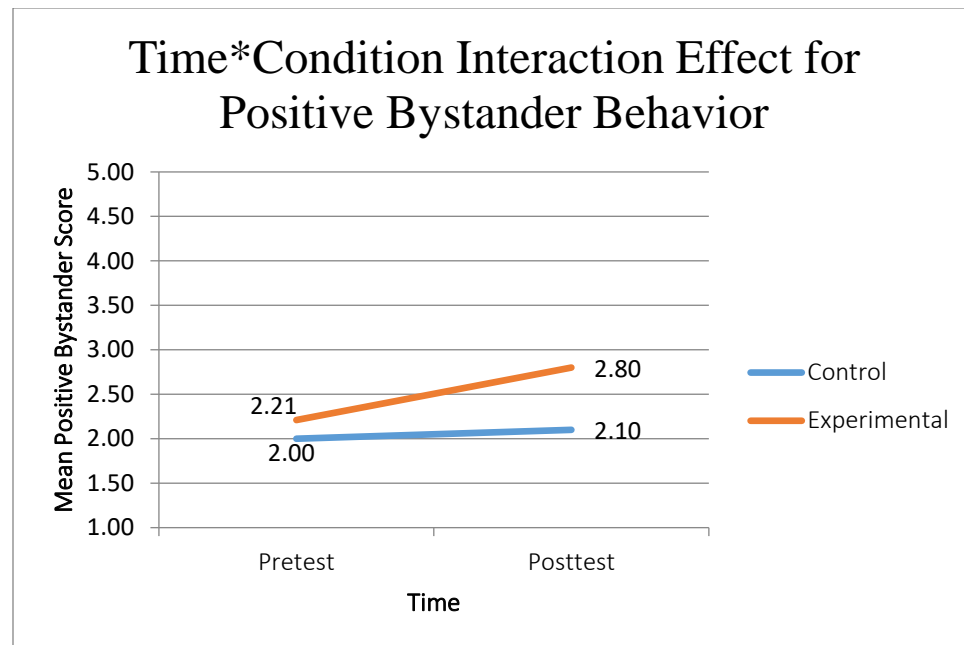
The assumption of homogeneity of variance for each dependent variable was checked using Levene's Test for School C data. Positive bystander pretest and posttest score variances were homogenous,  $F(1, 137) = .67$ ,  $p = 0.415$  and  $F(1, 137) = 3.71$ ,  $p = 0.056$ , respectively. Anti-bullying attitudes pretest scores were not homogenous,  $F(1, 101) = 8.76$ ,  $p = .004$ , but posttest score variances were homogenous,  $F(1, 101) = 1.19$ ,  $p = .277$ . Prosocial pretest scores were homogenous,  $F(1, 156) = .002$ ,  $p = .965$  however posttest scores were not homogenous,  $F(1, 156) = 11.98$ ,  $p < .001$ . Peer Friendship pretest and posttest score variances were homogenous,  $F(1, 100) = .715$ ,  $p = .400$  and  $F(1, 100) = 3.16$ ,  $p = .078$ , respectively. Victimization pretest and posttest score variances were not homogenous,  $F(1, 115) = 4.96$ ,  $p = .028$  and  $F(1, 115) = 5.00$ ,  $p = .027$ , respectively.

**Hypothesis 2.1.** Hypothesis 2.1 predicted the BLP increased positive bystanding (e.g., helping the victim, seeking help from an adult, telling the bully to stop) as rated by students, compared to the wait-list control group. This hypothesis was supported in Schools A and B combined, but not supported in School C. Specifically, in Schools A and B combined, a significant time-by-condition interaction was found for students' endorsement of positive bystanding,  $F(1, 166) = 4.72$ ,  $p = .031$  (see Figure 1) with the treatment group showing a greater increase in their positive bystanding behavior (from M

=2.21; SD = 1.11 to M = 2.80; SD = 1.32 after the *BLP* intervention) compared to the wait-list control group (from M = 2.00; SD = 1.13 to M = 2.10; SD = 1.22). The effect size was small ( $\eta_p^2 = .028$ ). Results also showed a significant main effect of time with students' reporting an increase in positive bystanding across time overall,  $F(1,166) = 9.406, p = .003$ . Scores of the two groups were not significantly different on the pretest survey ( $\alpha = .228$ ), providing evidence that differences at pretest were not a potential confounding variable.

*Figure 1*

Time-by-condition interaction effect for positive bystander behavior



In contrast, Hypothesis 2.1 was not supported in School C. Results did not show a time by treatment interaction for students' endorsement of positive bystanding,  $F(1, 137) = .302, p = .584$ . Students in the treatment and control condition experienced a slight

decrease their positive bystander behavior (from  $M=3.11$ ;  $SD=1.26$  to  $M=2.97$ ;  $SD=1.34$  in treatment and from  $M=3.02$ ;  $SD=1.18$  to  $M=2.97$ ;  $SD=1.34$  in control. Scores of the two groups were not significantly different at pretest ( $\alpha = .895$ ).

**Hypothesis 2.2.** Hypothesis 2.2 predicted the BLP increased anti-bullying attitudes as rated by elementary students compared to the control group. This hypothesis was not supported across Schools A and B combined or School C. Data from Schools A and B did not show a time by treatment interaction for student-reported anti-bullying attitudes,  $F(1, 157) = .223$ ,  $p = .638$ . Students reported a slight increase in antibullying attitudes at school in both experimental (from  $M = 3.91$ ;  $SD = 0.94$  to  $M = 3.97$ ;  $SD = 1.07$  after the *BLP*) and wait-list-control group ( $M = 3.91$ ;  $SD = 0.94$  to  $M = 3.97$ ;  $SD = 1.07$ ). These groups were not significantly different during the initial time point ( $\alpha = .727$ ).

In School C, there was no significant interaction between time and condition for anti-bullying attitudes,  $F(1,101) = 3.16$ ,  $p = .078$ . There was a main effect of time with both groups showing an increase of anti-bullying attitudes over time (from  $M = 4.19$ ;  $SD = .83$  to  $M = 4.28$ ;  $SD = .59$  in the control group and from  $M = 3.68$ ;  $SD = 1.0$  to  $M = 4.17$ ;  $SD = .943$  in the experimental group),  $F(1,101) = 6.74$ ,  $p = .011$ . The effect size was small ( $\eta_p^2 = .063$ ). These groups were significantly different during the initial time point ( $\alpha = .041$ ), which limits the comparison of these groups. Overall, Hypothesis 2.2 was not supported.

**Hypothesis 2.3.** Hypothesis 2.3 predicted the BLP increased teachers' perceptions of students' prosocial behavior (peers act supportive, kind, and helpful to their classmates) compared to the control group. This hypothesis was not supported across

Schools A and B, but was supported within School C. In Schools A and B, results did not show a time by treatment interaction for teacher-reported prosocial behavior,  $F(1, 162) = .001, p = .655$ . Results showed a significant main effect of time; teacher-reported prosocial behavior increased from pretest to posttest for both the experimental (from  $M = 3.99$ ;  $SD = 0.89$  to  $M = 4.20$ ;  $SD = 0.98$  after the *BLP*) and wait-list-control group (from  $M = 3.61$ ;  $SD = 0.89$  to  $M = 3.82$ ;  $SD = .94$ ),  $F(1, 162) = 17.64, p < .001$ . These groups were significantly different during the initial time point ( $\alpha = .013$ ), which limits the comparison of these groups.

In school C results showed a time by treatment interaction for teacher perceptions of prosocial behavior, with teachers reporting an increase in prosocial behavior across the experimental group (from  $M = 3.57$ ;  $SD = 0.85$  to  $M = 4.01$ ;  $SD = .79$ ) and a decrease for the wait-list-control group (from  $M = 3.61$ ;  $SD = .95$  to  $M = 3.38$ ;  $SD = 1.13$ ),  $F(1, 156) = 34.05, p < .001$ . There was a large effect size ( $\eta_p^2 = .179$ ). Results also showed a significant main effect of time,  $F(1, 156) = 4.47; p = .036$ . The experimental and control group did not have significantly different prosocial behavior scores at the initial time point ( $\alpha = .776$ ). Overall Hypothesis 2.3 was supported.

**Hypothesis 2.4.** Hypothesis 2.4 predicted the *BLP* increased peer friendship perceptions as rated by students compared to the control group. This hypothesis was not supported in Schools A and B, or School C. In Schools A and B, results did not show a time by treatment interaction for student-reported peer friendship,  $F(1, 158) = .003, p = .954$  (see Figure 2). Students reported a slight decrease in peer friendship in the experimental group (from  $M = 3.35$ ;  $SD = 0.68$  to  $M = 3.20$ ;  $SD = 0.87$  after the *BLP*)

and the wait-list-control group ( $M = 3.43$ ;  $SD = 0.76$  to  $M = 3.29$ ;  $SD = 0.87$ ) across time. These groups were not statistically significantly at the initial time point ( $\alpha = .271$ ).

In school C, there was no time by treatment interaction for students' perceptions of peer friendships,  $F(1, 100) = .394$ ,  $p = .531$ . Students reported a slight increase in peer friendship in the experimental group (from  $M = 3.25$ ;  $SD = 0.81$  to  $M = 3.44$ ;  $SD = 0.73$ ) and the wait-list-control group ( $M = 3.07$ ;  $SD = 0.87$  to  $M = 3.15$ ;  $SD = 0.97$ ) across time. These groups were not statistically significantly different at the initial time point ( $\alpha = .284$ ).

**Hypothesis 2.5.** Hypothesis 2.5 predicted the BLP reduced victimization based on student self-report, compared to the control group. This hypothesis was not supported in Schools A and B, or School C. In Schools A and B combined, results showed no time by treatment interaction for student-reported victimization,  $F(1, 156) = .940$ ,  $p = .334$ . Students reported a slight increase in victimization in both experimental (from  $M = 1.50$ ;  $SD = 0.64$  to  $M = 1.54$ ;  $SD = 0.64$  after the BLP) and wait-list-control group ( $M = 1.26$ ;  $SD = 0.40$  to  $M = 1.38$ ;  $SD = 0.50$ ), across time. These groups were significantly different during the initial time point ( $\alpha = .020$ ), which limits the comparison of these groups.

In School C there was not a significant interaction between time and condition for student-reported victimization,  $F(1, 115) = .189$ ,  $p = .664$ . Students reported a slight decrease in the control (from  $M = 1.78$ ;  $SD = .79$  to  $M = 1.71$ ;  $SD = .68$ ) and the experimental group (from  $M = 1.64$ ;  $SD = .56$  to  $M = 1.52$ ;  $SD = .50$ ) across time. These groups were not significantly different at pretest ( $\alpha = .429$ ).

### **Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 asked if gender, level of peer friendships, and anti-bullying attitudes, act as moderators for the time-by-condition interaction effect on the outcome of positive bystander behavior. Only moderators for the outcome of positive bystander behavior was considered—as this was the main outcome of the intervention. Only results for School A+B were investigated, as this was a more complete data set. See Table 6 for means and standard deviations. Before conducting the analysis, the assumptions of a three-way mixed ANOVA were investigated. The first assumption for a mixed ANOVA was met because all dependent variables were measured on a continuous scale (i.e., Likert scales). The second assumption that the within-subjects factor consists of at least two categorical “related groups” or “matched pairs” was also satisfied. In the mixed ANOVA, data were collected from the same subjects at two separate time points (i.e., pretest and posttest). The third assumption that the between-subjects factor consists of at least two categorical independent groups was also satisfied as subjects either belonged to the intervention or control group, were either male or female, were either in a “high” or “moderate-to-low” group for peer friendships and anti-bullying attitudes, and were either in third or fourth grade. The fourth assumption—that there should be no significant outliers in any group of the within-subjects or between-subjects factors—was checked by examining the box-and-whisker plots. No outliers were present in either the control or intervention group for positive bystander behavior by grade, at pretest or posttest. No outliers were present in either the control or intervention group for positive bystander behavior by anti-bully attitudes, at pretest or posttest. No outliers were present in either the control or intervention group for positive bystander behavior by gender. The control

group of high peer friendship had four outliers at pretest for positive bystanding behavior (outlier students reported “often” or “always” using positive bystander behavior among a majority of students reporting they had “never” displayed positive bystander behavior before the intervention). All other combinations for peer friendship by condition by time did not have outliers.

Three-way ANOVA’s are typically robust to violations of normality. The assumption of normality was tested via the examination of the residuals. Review of the S-W test for normality statistics for time by condition by anti-bullying attitudes suggested non-normality for positive bystander pretest and posttest residuals ( $W=.91, p < .001$  and  $W = .94, p < .001$ , respectively). Review of the S-W test for normality statistics for time by condition by peer friendship suggested non-normality for positive bystander pretest and posttest residuals ( $W=.92, p < .001$  and  $W = .94, p < .001$ , respectively). Review of the S-W test for normality statistics for time by condition by gender suggested non-normality of the positive bystander pretest and posttest residuals ( $W = 0.91, p < .001$  and  $W = 0.94, p < .001$ , respectively).

The assumption of homogeneity of variance for each dependent variable was checked using Levene’s Test in Schools A and B combined. Positive bystander pretest and posttest score variances were homogenous for anti-bullying attitudes at pretest by condition by time,  $F(4,162) = .83, p = .509$  and  $F(4,162) = .21, p = .935$ , respectively. Positive bystander pretest and posttest score variances were homogenous for the peer friendship by condition by time interaction,  $F(4, 163) = .82, p = .517$  and  $F(4, 163) = .98, p = .422$ , respectively. Positive bystander pretest and posttest score variances were

homogenous for gender by condition by time,  $F(3, 161) = 1.25, p = .293$  and  $F(3, 161) = 1.09, p = .354$ , respectively.

**Hypothesis 3.1.** Hypothesis 3.1 predicted that the interaction effect of time and condition differed by gender for the outcome of positive bystander behavior, with boys showing a greater change in their bystander behavior compared to girls. A non-significant time by condition by gender interaction was found for student endorsement of positive bystander behavior,  $F(1,161) = .047, p = .828$ . Scores for positive bystander behavior across gender were not significantly different at pretest in Schools A and B,  $F(1,183) = 3.492, p = .063$  ( $N = 101, M = 2.30, SD = 1.23$  for boys and  $N = 83, M = 1.98, SD = 1.00$  for girls).

**Hypothesis 3.2.** Hypothesis 3.2 predicted that the interaction effect of time by condition differed by the level of peer friendship before the onset of the intervention. Students with very high peer friendship at the onset of the intervention were hypothesized to be able to increase their positive bystander behavior as a result of the intervention compared to their counterparts. I divided the sample into students who had pretest peer friendship scores above the median and below the median (the mean was not used to split the peer friendship scores because of the ceiling effect for peer friendship; instead the median was determined to be a better indicator of central tendency). As such, “low-to-moderate peer friendship” was defined as a score of 3.60 or less, and “high” peer friendship was defined as any score higher than 3.60 (the range of the peer friendship variable was 1.00 to 4.00; Median = 3.60). A non-significant time by condition by peer friendship interaction was found for student ratings of positive bystander behavior,  $F(1, 163) = .393, p = .532$ .



**Hypothesis 3.3.** Hypothesis 3.3 predicted that the interaction effect of time by condition on positive bystander behavior differed by the level of anti-bullying attitudes before the onset of the intervention. Specifically, children with very high anti-bullying attitudes at pretest would increase their positive bystander behavior, as a result of the intervention, compared to their counterparts. I divided the sample into students who had pretest anti-bullying scores above the median and below the median (the mean was not to split the data set because of the ceiling effect for anti-bullying attitudes; instead, the median was determined to be a better indicator of central tendency). As such, “high” anti-bullying attitudes was defined as a score of higher than 4.33, while “low to moderate” anti-bullying attitudes were defined as scores less than 4.33 (the range of the anti-bullying attitude variable was 1.00 to 5.00; median = 4.33). A non-significant time by condition by anti-bullying attitudes interaction was found for the student ratings of positive bystanding,  $F(2, 162) = .40, p = .672$ .

Table 6

*Moderators of Positive Bystanding Behavior (Gender, Peer Friendship, Anti-bullying Attitudes, and Grade)*

				<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Moderator</i>						
Control	Pretest	Gender	Male	40	2.16	1.23
			Female	41	1.82	.99
Experimental	Pretest		Male	49	2.30	1.19
			Female	35	2.12	1.00
Total				165	2.11	1.00
Control	Posttest	Gender	Male	40	2.24	1.27
			Female	41	2.00	1.16
Experimental	Posttest		Male	49	2.82	1.27

			Female	35	2.81	1.38
Total				165	2.46	1.31
Control	Pretest	Peer Friend	High	42	1.79	1.16
			Low-Mod	41	2.21	1.07
Experimental	Pretest		High	26	2.11	1.14
			Low-Mod	57	2.25	1.12
Total			Missing n= 2	168	2.11	1.12
Control	Posttest	Peer Friend	High	42	1.95	1.11
			Low-Mod	41	2.25	1.31
Experimental	Posttest		High	26	3.01	1.62
			Low-Mod	57	2.73	1.15
Total			Missing n=2	168	2.45	1.31
Control	Pretest	Antibully Att	High	45	2.04	1.18
			Low-Mod	37	1.97	1.09
Experimental	Pretest		High	37	2.38	1.21
			Low-Mod	35	2.11	1.05
Total			Missing n= 4	168	2.11	1.12
Control	Posttest	Antibully Att	High	45	2.05	1.13
			Low-Mod	37	2.18	1.32
Experimental	Posttest		High	37	3.05	1.36
			Low-Mod	45	2.60	1.25
Total				168	2.45	1.31

Missing  
n=4

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## **Chapter 6: Discussion**

Bullying is an international concern for researchers, educators, parents, and other stakeholders. Longitudinal research suggests that the impact of childhood bullying on victims' mental health endures far past primary school years and has lasting effects into adulthood (McDougall and Vaillancourt, 2015; Lereya, Copeland, Costello, & Wolke, 2015). However, the negative impact of bullying reaches all participant roles, with bully-victims also showing poor mental health outcomes (Nansel et al., 2001) and bystanders reporting higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms (Midgett & Doumas, 2019).

Bullying is considered a group phenomenon. Bullying typically occurs in front of peer witnesses (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999), and bullies will cease perpetration more than half of the time when bystanders intervene (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001). Additionally, classroom, group, and school norms predict bullying behavior as well as defending behavior (Barhight, 2017; Nickerson & Mele-Taylor, 2014; Gendron, Williams, & Guerra, 2011). Bystander-based interventions offer an important component for socio-ecological approaches to combating the bullying problem, with early intervention being key in preventing persistent perpetration and its sequelae of negative effects. Children's literature may be used as an important medium during bystander intervention to help young children shift from being passive witnesses to positive bystanders, by allowing them to develop anti-bullying/pro-victim attitudes, empathy and perspective-taking, social skills, self-efficacy for defending, and personal responsibility to help their peers. Additionally, groups and classroom norms surrounding bullying can change when a majority of students in the classroom endorse the value of inclusion and empathy.

With the changing demographics and increasing diversity of the student body within the United States, current bullying interventions are tasked with demonstrating successful skill-acquisition and behavioral change for all groups of students. This study used an archival data set of a primarily Hispanic sample of third and fourth graders to investigate the effectiveness of a literature-based, bystander-focused bullying intervention, The Bullying Literature Project (BLP), on bystander behavior and other related outcomes. The intervention was implemented during the 2014 to 2015 academic year between October and May. Data were collected across three schools in the Southern California area. The data set was split due to structural and intervention implementation differences across schools. Specifically, Schools A and B were both public elementary schools (K–5<sup>th</sup> grade), implemented the intervention a full 45 minutes, and had relatively marginal intraclass correlations. In contrast, School C was a charter school housing students K–8<sup>th</sup> grade, implemented the intervention for only 30–35 minutes (which led to less discussion time and interactive elements in the intervention), had a less complete data set (in excess of 25% missing data across several variables), and a high amount of variance accounted for at the classroom level (e.g., ICC Classroom in School C for Anti-bullying Attitudes = .24). As such, results were reported with the full data set for research question 1 only, which used pretest data to answer basic exploratory questions on variables of interest. For research questions 2 and 3, concerning the effectiveness of the BLP intervention, Schools A and B (combined) and School C were analyzed separately.

This study aimed to: (a) add to the theoretical research base of bullying and bystander literature through exploratory analysis of the relationship among select variables of interest (i.e., gender, anti-bullying attitudes, prosocial behavior, peer

friendships, and victimization) in a primarily Hispanic sample, (b) examine the effectiveness of the Bullying Literature Project (Wang, Wang, Couch, Rodriguez, & Lee, 2015; Wang & Goldberg, 2017) on children's positive bystander behavior, attitudes towards bullying, prosocial behaviors, peer friendships, and victimization, and (c) to determine for whom the intervention worked better—that is, to determine if gender, level of peer friendship, and anti-bullying attitudes prior to the intervention affected the time-by-condition interaction effect on positive bystander behavior. The first aim, which focused on delineating the state of variables of interests and their relationship to each other was independent of the second and third aim, which focused on intervention effectiveness.

### **Aim 1: Exploratory Analysis**

**Prevalence.** Exploratory analysis of the pretest data revealed that 17.4% of students in the full sample (Schools A, B, and C) reported being victimized at least once during the school year. This prevalence rate matches prevalence estimates from other research in the field, which suggests that student reports of victimization by their peers are between 10% to 33% (Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016). In general, research has mixed findings for whether ethnic minorities, and Hispanic students specifically, experience higher rates of victimization than their ethnic counterparts. Data from the national Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBS) indicated higher rates of victimization for white students (21.8%), with the next highest for Hispanic students (17.8%), and the lowest for black students (12.7%) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014), although analyses were not included in the YRBS survey to determine whether these differences are statistically different.

**Grade and Gender differences.** Using the full data set, I explored grade and gender differences across variables of interest and contrasted the results to existing literature. Fourth graders showed higher scores for positive bystanding, anti-bullying attitudes, and teacher-rated prosocial behavior compared to third graders. Existing literature typically compares elementary school to middle school samples and notes that children endorse pro-victim sentiments in mid-childhood, but that sympathy for victims dissipate with age (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). However, no research exists that predicts bystander behavior and other outcome differences between third and fourth graders. Developmentally, these groups may be considered relatively similar, although fourth graders may be older, taller, and bigger than their third-grade counterparts. Fourth graders being more developed than their third graders may translate to higher levels of assertiveness and strategies for approaching social problem solving, confidence in their bystander behavior, and more social experiences and knowledge of bullying perpetration and how it can be harmful. Older children may also display better self-control, and may be more likely to partake in intentional social decision making in favor of helping behavior, as this aligns with their moral reasoning (e.g., I recognize when someone needs help, and I have made a choice to help them because that's what good people do and that is what is expected of me). Additionally, compared to older kids, young kids may have more challenges capturing nuanced or covert type of bullying compared to their older counterparts, who may be better equipped to recognize when bullying is occurring. It is also possible that classroom norm differences may account for grade differences in positive bystanding, anti-bullying attitudes, and teacher-rated prosocial behavior. Stronger class norms against bullying have been found when comparing fourth graders to

fifth and sixth graders (middle schoolers) (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). However, when differences in classroom norms do exist between third and fourth graders in regard to bullying and helping behavior, it is unclear whether these norms are due to grade level or due to unidentified extraneous variables (e.g., better classroom rules established for fourth graders than third graders; guest speakers for fourth graders for helping behavior; better classroom social connectedness for fourth graders versus third graders).

As to gender differences, I found that females showed higher scores for anti-bullying attitudes, peer friendship, and teacher-rated prosocial behavior compared to their male counterparts. This mirrors literature findings for similar variables, in which girls show more positive attitudes towards victims (e.g., Rigby & Slee 1993), express more readiness to support the victims (Rigby & Johnson 2006), use more approach-oriented coping strategies to social problem-solving (such as seeking social support) (Causey & Dubow, 1992), and are more likely to have higher levels of cognitive and affective empathy, (Poyhonen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2010) compared to boys. These differences may, in part, relate to differences in how boys and girls are socialized. Gender socialization theorists (e.g., Brody, 1999) posit that girls are socialized to be more attuned to others' emotions compared to boys. Specifically, society may project an expectation, and provide models of behavior, centered around girls being nurturing, caring, sociable, dependent, sensitive, and tolerant. In contrast, boys may be expected to assertive, confident, and dominant in their social interactions (Quatman & Watson, 2001). This modeled behavior may transfer to different developmental patterns for empathic concern and perspective-taking across girls and boys (e.g., Carlo, Padilla-Walker, & Nielson, 2015; Van der Graaff et al. 2014).



In contrast to existing literature (e.g., Menesini et al., 2003; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Caravita et al. 2009; Gini et al. 2007; Poyhonen, Juvonen, Salmivalli, 2010), I found that girls did not show higher positive bystander behavior compared to boys (i.e., Hypothesis 1.1 is not supported). This finding may be a true representation of gender and positive bystander behavior among younger grades, as most other bullying research focuses on later elementary school and middle school ages. Importantly, these findings may also be an artifact of measurement differences between the current study and prior literature, as a majority of studies use a peer-nomination format to measure participant roles (see the Participant Role Questionnaire as an example; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004) instead of self-report. In peer nomination, students are asked to think of situations in which someone has been bullied and to think of how often their classmate behaves in the way described (the defender scale may have items related to comforting the victim, encouraging him/her to tell the teacher about the bullying, telling the others to stop bullying, or trying to make the others stop bullying). Each student's peer-evaluated sum score on each scale is then divided by the number of classmates to produce a continuous score, with students who are consistently nominated by the most classmates having higher scores than their counterparts.

Peer nomination differs from self-report, which is a student's personal perception and recollection of their own defending behavior rather than collective classroom consensus on an individual's behavior. This study opted to use self-report measure instead of peer nomination procedures. However, personal ratings of behavior may likely differ from classroom consensus ratings of behavior (specifically, studies suggest peer nomination and self-report have small-to-moderate correlations; Salmivalli et al., 1996).

Girls may be more likely than boys to be seen by their peers as prosocial and as exhibiting intentional helping behavior, compared to if they were to rate their own helping behavior.

Finally, this study showed no differences across gender or grade for rates of victimization. These findings align with the literature for gender and victimization, which finds that girls and boys are victimized at similar rates (Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016). Due to third and fourth graders being close in age and development, no differences in victimization rates or peer friendships were expected between grades.

**Research Question 1.** Research question 1 asked how the variables of gender, anti-bullying attitudes, prosocial behavior, peer friendships, and victimization relate to each other and predict positive bystander behavior. Hypothesis 1.1 (that girls would show higher self-reported positive bystander behavior) was not supported (as I have discussed above in the Gender and Grade section). Hypothesis 1.2 (that anti-bullying attitudes, prosocial behavior, victimization, and peer friendship would predict a significant amount of variation in student-reports of their own positive bystander behavior, with each variable being a significant predictor in the model for positive bystander behavior) was partially supported. Hypothesis 1.3 (that there would be a negative correlation between peer friendship and victimization) was supported. Hypothesis 1.4 (that there would be a positive correlation between anti-bullying beliefs and teacher-rated prosocial behavior) was not supported. See the discussion below. Research question 1 used pre-test data to explore to the state of the relationships of these variables of interest and was independent from Research question 2 and 3 (which focused on intervention effects between pretest and posttest).

When taken together, anti-bullying attitudes, teacher-rated prosocial behavior, victimization, and peer friendship predicted 13.8% of the variance in positive bystanding behavior. However, only anti-bullying attitudes and victimization were significant predictors for positive bystanding within the model (Hypothesis 1.2 partially supported). Each predictor is discussed further below.

Corresponding with previous literature (e.g., Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Pozzoli & Gini, 2012) I found that anti-bullying attitudes significantly predicted positive bystanding in the regression model. This result adds to the strong literature base that shows that children with anti-bullying or pro-victim attitudes are more likely to be defenders. There may be several reasons that anti-bullying or pro-victim attitudes are linked to defending behavior. Social psychology research suggests that before intervening to help a victim, the defender must first notice that something has occurred, and then interpret the event as an emergency and not something innocuous (Latanè & Darley, 1970; Pozzoli & Gini, 2012). Attitudes and beliefs that bullying is harmful may make children more sensitive when they witness bullying perpetration events, which can be the first important step in a child taking action to help the victim. Central to the theory of planned behavior is that intentions are key influencers of behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In order to change intentions, participants' awareness of bullying and beliefs about subjective norms surrounding bullying must be targeted. As such, anti-bullying beliefs with moral connotations (e.g., that bullying is wrong and undesirable in a particular context) may transfer to real-life positive bystanding behavior during bullying perpetration. The anti-bullying attitudes measure that this study used was a mixture of both pro-victim attitudes (e.g., "bullies make kids feel bad", "bullying is a problem for kids") and anti-bullying

beliefs (“I don’t like bullies”, “I think bullies should be punished”), both of which are predictors of defending behavior (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Pozzoli & Gini, 2012).

Victimization was also a significant predictor in the model for positive bystanding; students who experienced high levels of victimization were also more likely to be defenders. This result may relate to the fact that victims who have been exposed to bullying perpetration currently or in the past are likely to have better affective empathy for another classmate being victimized, which can in turn translate to higher positive bystanding. However, results are mixed within the literature for whether victims have higher affective empathy. Caravita and colleagues found a small positive correlation between victimization and affective empathy, but only for girls (Carivita et al., 2010).

Several other studies have found no such correlation (see Van Noorden, Haselager, Cillessen, & Bukowski, 2014 for a review of victimization and affective empathy).

Another reason for the link between victimization and defending is that victims may have more anti-bullying attitudes towards bullies and more admiration towards bystanders (Kollerová, Janošová, & Říčan, 2014), which is likely to relate to positive bystanding behavior. Specifically, when given hypothetical vignettes, adolescents who were peer-nominated as victims were more likely to evaluate the hypothetical bullying perpetrator with negative terms from a 26-word list. Specifically, peer-nominated victims depicted a hypothetical bully using words relating to concepts such as “evil soul” (evil, malicious, villains, cruel), “contempt” (idiots, freaks, crooks), and “cowardice” (cowards, wimps), and “deviance” (awkward, nasty, strange). These same peer-nominated victims evaluated the hypothetical defender with more positive terms suggesting themes of “admiration” (great, okay, excellent, nice, good, buddy, upright), “empathic caring” (sympathetic,

sensitive, kind, self-sacrificing, considerate, unselfish), and “justice” (just, fair, honest) (Kollerová, Janošová, & Říčan, 2014).

In addition, the result that victimization is a significant predictor of positive bystander behavior may relate to the growing research on participant role “profiles.” Specifically, current literature suggests that there can be an overlap between various bullying participant-role behaviors, and that individuals can participate in more than one participant role, such as bully and victim, or victim and defender (Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012). As such, the correlation between victimization and bystander behavior may represent members who are mostly victimized, mostly defenders, or a mixture of both. Studies utilizing latent class analysis may be able to parse these different participant-role profiles and predict in finer detail how different profiles respond in a bullying situation.

While other studies found that children’s student-rated social skills and prosocial behavior positively relate to their defending behaviors (Jenkins, Demeray, & Tennant, 2017), in this study teacher-rated prosocial behavior was not a significant predictor for student-reported positive bystander behavior in the regression model. Prosocial behavior rated by teachers was also not a significant correlate to positive bystanding behavior in this study. Jenkins and colleagues (2017) measured the link between defending behavior and a related construct of social skills in 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> graders, using the student version of the Social Skills Improvement System Rating Scale (SSIS; Gresham & Elliott, 2008). They found that defending behaviors correlated with the specific social-skills subscales of empathy, assertion, cooperation, and responsibility. In contrast, the present study used a prosocial behavior scale that measured more general helping behavior (e.g., “this child is helpful to peers”, “this child is kind to peers”), rather than specific social skills.

Importantly, researchers recognize that defending behavior during bullying episodes is more socially complex than helping (prosocial) behavior (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). This is because helping the victim can be involve risk to the helper, who may be confronting a powerful bully and their supporters, or who may be risking personal social status by associating with an unliked victim (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). As such, defending behavior likely utilizes very specific social skill behaviors that were not measured in this study and which go above and beyond general helping behaviors. Additionally, teacher-reported prosocial behavior may not correlate with student self-report bystander behavior due to using different raters for each variable. Studies that examine the agreement of cross informants of the same construct often find conflicting patterns due to each rater reflecting a different context of the measured behavior (Renk & Phares, 2004).

Comparing a teacher-rated measure to self-report measure may similarly pull for different contexts (e.g., observation by the teacher vs. perception by the student; observation of behavior in the classroom vs. perception of behavior across school and home contexts).

Finally, while students with stronger social connections (i.e., peer friendship) in the classroom were expected to exhibit higher positive bystanding behaviors (e.g., standing up to the bully), compared to their less socially-secure counterparts, this hypothesis was not supported. Specifically, peer friendship was not a significant predictor for positive bystanding behavior in the regression model. Peer friendship was also not a significant correlate to positive bystanding behavior. This finding contrasts with studies that show that social preference (e.g., how much the student is liked by peers) is linked to general prosocial behavior (Wentzel, Filisetti, & Looney, 2007), and specifically to defending in mid-childhood (Caravita et al., 2009). Social preference is

typically measured by peer nominations of most-liked and least-liked students. In contrast, the peer-friendship measure used in this study was a self-report on whether students had friends that liked them, stuck up for them, and cared about them, etc. It is likely that this measure was not a strong proxy for measuring social status, and that it did not differentiate socially preferred students from their counterparts. This may be due to the fact that self-reported friendships are based on an individual's perception of their friends in the class, whereas peer nomination is based more on consensus from students within the class on whether an individual is well-liked and supported. Additionally, while not a formal research question, higher-quality peer friendships were found to be positively correlated with anti-bullying attitudes. It is possible that students who had secure friendships were better able to recognize socially aggressive behavior such as bullying, and to understand how bullying might be undesirable and hurtful to others.

Consistent with previous literature, the results also revealed a negative correlation between peer friendship and victimization (Hypothesis 1.3 supported). Several studies have found that students who develop good friendships are less likely to be bullied (i.e., friendship is a protective factor in being targeted for victimization) (e.g., Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Hodges & Perry, 1999). Indeed, students with many friends may present as “riskier” targets for bullies due to the existence of this peer support, while students without close friends in the classroom may be easier targets. On the other hand, being victimized may also lead to a loss of friendship relationships. For example, affiliating with victims may increase social risk for the potential helper which can lead to them avoiding the victim. Additionally, victims may also start to withdraw from peers as a result of bullying, which can further exacerbate their social risk (Vlachou, Andreou,

Botsoglou, & Didaskalou, 2011). Victims can sometimes exhibit social-skill challenges, which may lend itself to issues with forming close friendships, which may in turn increase social risk towards victimization. While not a formal research questions, results from this study showed a small, negative correlation between victimization and prosocial behavior. If students who are victimized lack specific social skills or prosocial behavior, this can in turn impact the quality of their peer interactions, which further increases the risk of victimization (Jenkins, Demaray, Frederick, & Summers, 2016; Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010).

Finally, this study did not find a correlation between anti-bullying attitudes and teacher-rated prosocial behavior (Hypothesis 1.4 not supported). The anti-bullying attitudes that this study measured were limited to beliefs and attitudes about bullying and victims. In the particular context of bullying, prosocial behavior represents assertive helping behavior within a particular social event and involves several other agents (bully, victim, and witnesses). Specific attitudes toward bullying may not have transferred to a more general and less socially complex context of helping individuals in need (Pozzonli & Gini, 2010). Additionally, the prosocial behavior variable showed ceiling effects, with a majority of teachers reporting high initial prosocial behavior across all schools. The propensity of high scores within the prosocial behavior variable may have resulted in the lack of a significant relationship between positive bystanding and anti-bullying beliefs.

### **Aim 2 and 3: Effectiveness of the BLP**

**Research Question 2.** Research question 2 asked to what extent the BLP increases positive bystanding behavior, changes attitudes regarding bullying, increases prosocial behavior as rated by teachers, increases peer friendship perceptions as rated by



students, and reduces student self-reported victimization, compared to the control group. Hypothesis 2.1 (that BLP increases positive bystanding) was supported in the School A and B data set. Hypothesis 2.3 (that BLP increases prosocial behavior compared to the control group) was supported in School C. All other hypotheses were not supported across schools. See below for a discussion.

For School A and B combined, the results indicated that positive bystanding increased from pretest to posttest in the experimental group, but that it stayed relatively the same for students in the wait-list control group (Hypothesis 2.1). However, the effect size was small. The experimental and wait-list-control group did not perform significantly differently on the pretest survey, which provides evidence that differences at pretest were not a confounding variable for the interaction effect. Additionally, the ICCs for this variable were “low” ( $ICC < .10$ ), which suggest less risk of Type I error. Within School A and B combined, the intervention was implemented for the full 45 minutes, but within School C, the intervention was only implemented for 30–35 minutes. This shortened time of implementation in School C is likely to have contributed to the nonsignificant result for positive bystander behavior in School C.

In summary, results for Schools A and B suggest that the BLP successfully improved positive bystanding behavior among 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-grade students. The BLP intervention used a combination of guided discussions, writing, and role-plays based on stories that modeled positive ways to solve conflict and engage in bystander interventions. Results indicate that using children’s literature is a promising avenue to impact behavioral change in a majority-Hispanic sample of children. This short-term

intervention was successfully integrated into existing curriculum within the schools, utilized minimal resources, and showed high teacher and student social validity.

There are several potential reasons for the BLP's success in increasing positive bystanding. Rather than focusing on bully wrongdoing, the BLP intervention was largely victim-centered in terms of improving perspective-taking and empathy for the victim. This was conceptualized to impact cognitive and affective empathy for the victim, both of which are linked to actual defending behavior (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Pozzoli & Gini, 2012; Van Noorden, Hasaleger, Cillesen, & Bukowski, 2014). The BLP's focus on modeling defending behavior (e.g. modeling asking the bully to stop, being a good friend, and seeking help on behalf of the victim) is also hypothesized to have aided in behavioral change for positive bystander behaviors. Explicit skill instruction (including language to use when stopping bullying perpetration, identifying adults to ask for help, and determining plans for how to help the victim) may be important considerations, and active ingredients, for future implementation by researchers and teachers. Importantly, explicit instruction for how to be a good positive bystander is paramount, as possible situations can occur where students inappropriately or ineffectually attempt to defend others. While classroom observations indicate that when peers intervene, they do so in a socially appropriate manner (Atlas & Pepler, 1998), other studies have found that 32% of peer interventions on the playground were socially inappropriate or aggressive (Craig & Pepler, 1995). Modeling appropriate defending behavior versus inappropriate defending behavior across different contexts and scenarios may be an important component in a successful bystander-based intervention.

A strength of the BLP, and an important consideration for bystander-based bullying interventions, is its ability to personalize action plans for defending behavior. This is because not all students should be expected to use the same defending behaviors. For example, students with high social status or who have positive relationships with the bully may be best equipped to speak directly with the bullying perpetrator. This is due to the fact that their high social status (i.e., being well-liked/having high social preference) can serve as a protective factor for a defender and reduces the risk they will become the perpetrator's next target (Carivita et al., 2010). In contrast, students who have lower social status in the classroom or who also fear the bully should be encouraged to use alternative positive bystander behaviors (such as befriending the victim, defusing the situation or distracting the bully, or seeking help from an adult). The BLP specifically showcased a story of alternative positive bystander behavior (where a student befriends a victimized peer after she herself is victimized) in order to model additional options for students.

We found no significant interaction effects in School A and B for the more "secondary" outcomes (i.e., teacher-reported prosocial behavior, peer friendship, and victimization). The short duration and intensity of the intervention may have limited its generalization to these variables, which are more difficult to explicitly model in role play. Importantly, many of these variables also showcased ceiling effects (i.e., prosocial and peer friendship) or floor effects (victimization), which lowered the ability of the intervention to have a meaningful impact on these outcomes. Most surprisingly, the intervention did not influence anti-bullying attitudes, even though attitudes have commonly been shown to be influenced in previous bullying interventions. However,

similar to other variables of interest, students already showcased high anti-bullying attitudes at the beginning of the intervention (e.g., responding that it was “sort of true” that bullies hurt others, that they made other kids feel bad, and that they feel sorry for kids who are bullied). As such, there may not have been adequate room for changing anti-bullying attitudes to be significantly more positive.

For Research Question 2 using data from School C, only Hypothesis 2.3 was supported. Specifically, students exposed to the BLP showed an increase in teacher-rated prosocial behavior while the wait-list control group experienced a decrease in teacher-rated prosocial behavior. This interaction effect demonstrated a large effect size. Additionally, the two groups were not significantly different at pretest, and the ICCs for this variable were “low” ( $ICC < .10$ ), which suggest less risk for Type I error. Overall, results suggest that the BLP can improve general helping behavior (e.g., saying supportive things to peers, cheering up peers who are sad, and being kind). Prosocial behavior is an important component of the intervention as it entails general helping behavior, kindness between students, and empathy. Gini (2006) found that assistants to bullying perpetrators reported significantly higher levels of having a lack of empathetic response to a social or emotional problem compared to defenders. A lack of empathic response also coincides with pro-bully behaviors among elementary students (Pozzoli, Gini, & Vieno, 2012). The improvement the BLP shows in prosocial behavior may lower pro-bullying behaviors during bullying perpetration, which can in turn lower the frequency, duration, and intensity of bullying occurrences. Classrooms that have high levels of prosocial behavior may also benefit from positive prosocial norms—which has

also been shown to improve bystander behavior and to decrease bullying behavior (Barhight, 2017; Nickerson & Mele-Taylor, 2014; Gendron, Williams, & Guerra, 2011).

Interestingly, the BLP improved prosocial behavior for School C but not Schools A and B. This may have been due to differences across schools in teachers' opportunities to supervise and observe student behavior outside of classroom (e.g., recess and lunch). In Schools A and B, teachers were not present during student lunch and recess. Instead, playground or lunch supervisors observed kids during that time. As such, teachers may not have been able to observe and report prosocial behavior that could have occurred during lunch or recess time. In contrast, teachers in school C monitored student behavior during lunch time and as such may have been able to observe improvements in prosocial behavior in this setting. There were also treatment implementation differences in School C compared to School A and B. School C received an abbreviated version of the intervention that included less discussion, role-play, and personal sharing and personalization.

The BLP implemented in School C did not improve positive bystanding (Hypothesis 2.1), anti-bullying attitudes (Hypothesis 2.2), peer friendships (Hypothesis 2.4), or victimization (Hypothesis 2.5). There are myriad potential reasons for this lack of effect. The intervention was implemented for a shorter period of time in school C. The data set for School C had a large amount of missing data, reduced exposure to the intervention, and may have been subject to marked classroom-level effects (e.g., anti-bullying attitudes at pretest had an ICC = .24). Additionally, School C included children from grades K to grade 8; exposure to older age groups could potentially impact the effectiveness of the intervention.

In summary, the answer to research question 2 is that the Bullying Literature Project is an intervention that can increase positive bystander behavior and prosocial behavior in elementary age children. There are several potential reasons why the BLP was effective. The BLP intervention targets socio-cognitive skills that are positively linked to positive bystanding and helping behavior and negatively linked to bullying perpetration (i.e., empathy and perspective taking). The BLP also provides explicit skill instruction for helping behaviors toward the victim through modeling and role-play. Finally, the BLP can provide personalized plans for appropriate behavior during bullying perpetration through writing, drawing activities, and discussions. There are also various reasons why other variables were not found to improve as a result of the intervention (e.g., short duration of the intervention, floor and ceiling effects of select variables, reduced exposure to the lesson, measurement differences between the present study and previous literature). However, research also suggests that teaching social-emotional skills to typically developing children in general education settings can produce lower effects compared to working with children in a clinical population (Castrol-Olivo 2014; Merrell, 2010). As such, despite the fact that BLP is a short intervention conducted with the general population of students, its statistically significant changes in helping behaviors represent great promise for its utility and effectiveness in the school setting.

**Research Question 3.** Research Question 3 asked if gender, level of peer friendships, or level of anti-bullying attitudes, were moderators for the time-by-condition interaction effect on the outcome of positive bystander behavior. I reported findings only for Schools A and B, which was a more complete data set. For Hypothesis 3.1, it was predicted that the interaction effect of time and condition differed by gender, with boys

showing a greater change in their bystander behavior compared to girls, as a result of the intervention. This was due to the assumption that boys would showcase lower positive bystander behavior at pretest and thus have more room to grow in their positive bystander behavior compared to girls. This hypothesis was not supported: boys and girls did not differ in positive bystander behavior at pretest. I also hypothesized that students with very high peer friendship before the onset of the intervention would increase their positive bystander behavior as a result of the intervention compared to their less socially secure counterparts (Hypothesis 3.2), and that children with high anti-bullying attitudes at pretest would increase their positive bystander behavior more than their lower-anti-bullying counterparts, as a result of the intervention (Hypothesis 3.3). Neither of these hypotheses were supported. Peer friendship and anti-bullying attitude variables demonstrated ceiling effects, which lessens the ability to truly differentiate profiles of responders to the intervention.

## **Conclusions**

This study provides a unique contribution to the research on bystander behavior and related outcomes using a majority-Hispanic sample. Exploratory analysis revealed similarities and differences with existing literature on European or European-American samples. Furthermore, this study investigated a novel literature-based bystander intervention among Hispanic elementary students. Specifically, the *BLP* was a 5-week short-term program designed to be embedded into an elementary school's existing language arts curriculum (Domitrovich et al., 2010; Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009). This program focused on skill-training and behavioral change through the use of modeling, role-play, reading/writing activities, and discussions. Additionally, this

program sought to build victim-centered perspective-taking and empathy, which are theoretically linked to positive bystander behavior (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Pozzoli & Gini, 2012; van Noorden, Hasaleger, Cillessen, & Bukowski, 2014). The preliminary results presented here suggest that this short intervention is effective in impacting bystander behavior and teacher-rated prosocial behavior—however, these results varied across different implementation constraints, school structures, and teachers’ ability to observe student behavior across multiple settings. Additionally, many of the hypotheses for secondary outcomes were not supported—suggesting that further changes to the intervention are warranted in order for the BLP to consistently impact a wide range of important bystander-related outcomes. Still, these results are promising, as most short-term anti-bullying efforts are ineffective in altering students’ behavior (Ferguson et al., 2007). As such, further exploration of the BLP’s impact on positive bystander behavior and related outcomes is warranted, especially among schools and populations with a moderate-to-high frequency of victimization and bullying (with more to gain from the intervention) and across diverse schools and environments.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

There were several limitations to the current investigation. A major limitation was the need to divide the whole data set between schools. The intervention was designed to be completed in 45 minutes or more, yet an entire school (School C) received a “diluted” version of the intervention. School C also had high classroom-level intraclass correlations, which made the use of the ANOVA statistical model less than ideal. Future research should consider using a multi-level model in order to account for the nested nature of the data set. However, a simulation study found biased estimates of second-



level standard errors when the sample size for level 2 (e.g., classrooms) was small ( $N < 50$ ), and suggested that only with sample sizes of greater than 50 were estimates of the regression coefficients, the variance components, and the standard errors unbiased and accurate (Maas & Hox, 2005). As such, additional data needs to be collected on the BLP implementation before utilizing multi-level model analysis. In the future, using a multi-level model could allow the full data-set to be explored in greater depth, such as noting potential effects of duration of treatment (35 minutes vs. 45 minutes) on intervention outcomes.

A related statistical limitation of this study is that multiple tests were run on multiple dependent variables. Using separate ANOVAs for each dependent variable increases the risk of committing a Type 1 error (i.e., rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true). Additionally, for research question three, the moderators of antibullying attitudes and peer friendships were transformed into dichotomous variables using a median split—which reduced the variance across these moderators. Future work may consider investigating these moderators using original scores.

Thirdly, almost all variables that this study included experienced ceiling or floor effects, which created challenges in identifying true change by way of the intervention and created issues with meeting the normality assumptions inherent in an ANOVA analysis. Bystanding behavior across schools, and the prosocial variable for School C, were one of the few variables with room to showcase intervention effects.

Fourth, while this study is novel in that it utilizes a Hispanic sample of children, the results have limited generalizability to non-Hispanic samples. Future studies might explore the efficacy of this intervention in other regions and populations and consider the

specific types of bullying that may occur across other regions with different school climates and environmental factors. This program also sheds light on the need for more cultural and linguistic resources that can be provided to participants' families. In the BLP intervention, parent letters describing the intervention, together with parenting strategies to prevent bullying and a list of recommended books, were sent home in both English and Spanish. Such communication components, while vital to any bullying program, were especially important in the BLP implementation in order to connect with parents and encourage their involvement in bullying prevention.

Importantly, another limitation of the study involves using self-report and teacher-report measures. While the intention of the study was to measure the impact of the BLP on student *behavior*, in reality measures of positive bystander behavior, peer friendships, victimization, and prosocial behavior were measures of peer or teacher *perceptions of behavior*. As such, self-report measures can be susceptible to extraneous variables including social desirability (students responding that they have anti-bullying attitudes because they want to present as against bullying or they believe that is how their teacher wants them to respond, regardless of whether or not this reflects their true beliefs). Related to measurement challenges, teachers were aware that they were in the control versus the experimental group, which may have biased answers for the outcome of prosocial behavior and makes it difficult to interpret the intervention's true effect on this variable. Specifically, the significant time by treatment interaction for the outcome of teacher-rated prosocial behavior (for Schools C) may be due to true interaction effects, rater-bias, or a mixture of both. Additionally, while the same person doing the intervention every time is a strength of the BLP (in terms of consistent style and delivery

of the intervention across classrooms and schools), the interventionists also completed their own treatment fidelity measures rather than a different researcher or team member completing the treatment fidelity measure. This may also introduce the possibility of bias in the measurement of the BLP's treatment fidelity.

Future directions of the BLP intervention will be directed toward finer-tuned measurement instruments for empathy and measuring a larger set of social skills that relate to bystander behavior (e.g., communication, assertiveness). Future research may also use peer-nomination data of defending and peer friendship, versus self-report, in order to curtail some challenges inherent in self-report ratings (e.g., social desirability, measuring real-world behavior versus perception of personal behavior). Additionally, future research of the BLP intervention will focus on "process data" in addition to outcome data—that is, what did children say during the discussion questions, how did they answer the questions, what did they generate from their experiences in relation to the story, and how they developed or presented their understanding of right from wrong. Specifically, interventionists' prompts and student participation (i.e., student statements, interventionist statements, how much time students and interventionists speak) may be recorded and coded by a third observer, and tracked across different sessions of the intervention. This process data can allow for recording shifts in student perceptions, understanding of bullying, and statements of empathy and perspective taking, which can then be linked to study outcomes measured (i.e., self-report variables of antibullying attitudes, peer friendships, victimization, positive bystander behaviors and teacher-reported prosocial behavior). This same observer can also be utilized to record treatment fidelity, as opposed to the interventionist completing the treatment fidelity, and can also

record how much time is spent on each component of the intervention. Further implementation of the BLP may also consider longitudinal effects by collecting follow-up data and offering post-intervention booster sessions. Future directions may also focus on collecting effectiveness data after training school staff (e.g., teachers, school psychologists, and social workers) to implement the intervention, in order to gain insight into feasibility of other stakeholders as implementers of the program.

### **Implications**

Schools are now commonly regarded as the “de facto” mental health system for children and adolescents (Whitaker et al., 2018), with schools having the unique opportunity to be a vehicle for both prevention and intervention. In tandem with this shift, school psychologists have experienced widening roles from solely special-education-eligibility-assessment experts to providers of prevention, mental health interventions, and consultation. This may be because school psychologists are uniquely situated to facilitate and translate current theory and research within the field into daily practices and interventions that support mental wellness and social-emotional skill development for all students.

Of specific concern to the mental health and wellbeing of students is the negative impact of bullying on students’ academic, social, and emotional development. In a meta-analysis, several important program elements of bullying interventions were identified as being associated with a decrease in bullying and victimization. These included more intensive programs, parent meetings, firm disciplinary methods, and improved playground supervision. In contrast, work with peers was associated with an increase in victimization (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). However, these findings involved a mixture of

“peer” programs, some of which were facilitated solely by peers (e.g., peer mediation or peer-led conflict resolution, forced apology, or peer mentoring). Such programs can be associated with null or iatrogenic effects, as they potentially pit the victim face-to-face with the bully without remediating the underlying power dynamic (Rivera & Le Menestrel, 2016). In contrast, bystander-based interventions seek to moderate the power dynamic between the bully and victim by involving peers as positive bystanders that can disrupt the social rewards of bullying. Select studies on bystander-based interventions have found promising outcomes for decreasing bullying and victimization (e.g., Karna et al., 2013; Noncentini & Menesini, 2016), and indicate that bystander behavior and related outcomes can be positively impacted by bystander intervention (Polanin et al., 2012).

One particular area of promise in bystander-based bullying interventions is using children’s literature (i.e., bibliotherapy) to improve student behavior and social-emotional skills. The Bullying Literature Project is a good example of a bibliotherapy intervention that is theory-driven, practice-oriented, short in duration, and feasible, and which school psychologists can use to improve outcomes for all students. Interested implementers should refer to the growing body of literature that supports that the BLP improves social-emotional skill development and helping behavior, which can help curtail victimization in schools. Specifically, results for one implementation of the BLP among elementary students indicated marginally significant intervention effects for social-emotional assets and significant intervention effects for prosocial behavior (Wang, Couch, Rodriguez, & Lee, 2015). Results from a different implementation (the BLP-Moral Disengagement version) revealed significant time-by-treatment interactions for decreasing both victimization and moral disengagement in treatment classrooms compared to wait-list

control classrooms (Wang & Goldberg, 2017). Finally, results from this current study note increased positive bystanding and prosocial behavior in treatment classrooms compared to control classrooms. Within a multi-tiered approach, the BLP can be administered as a schoolwide prevention/early intervention program at the universal (i.e., Tier 1) level, in order to promote these positive behaviors and socio-cognitive skills for all students. School psychologists can serve as interventionists, consultants, and facilitators of this program. School psychologists can also be trainers—by championing the benefits of bullying prevention programs such as the BLP and training teachers as implementers. Specifically, teachers may feel most comfortable with using the medium of literature to help students access social-emotional skills and model positive behaviors, as books are consistently used in the classroom and can be easily integrated into the existing English Language Arts curriculum and goals. In terms of the BLP, students and teachers reported high social validity, and they enjoyed the program. Teachers believed that students learned useful skills, liked the way the program was taught, and would recommend the program to other teachers (i.e., moderate-to-high social validity among teachers). Teacher buy-in and teacher satisfaction of the intervention is an especially important component of school-based intervention success, as educators are typically the primary vehicle of delivery in Tier 1 interventions.

While the BLP can be implemented school-wide, an important strength of the BLP is that it can be easily “personalized” to the unique needs of the classroom and school. Specifically, before the intervention (during pretest), the BLP collects data on frequency, location, and reasons for kids being bullied at school. This can allow schools to make data-based decisions to deter bullying, such as providing better supervision at

designated “hot-spots” (areas where bullying occurs often). However, these data can also allow the intervention itself to be better tailored to school-specific risk and protective factors. For example, an implementer may incorporate more role-plays about playgroup bullying if students report the playground as a “hot-spot” for bullying. Another example is that an implementer may highlight the importance of being respectful towards other students who are different from you based on their language/accent, clothing, etc., if those factors were identified by students as reason they were bullied. In addition to tailoring the intervention to the specific school, the intervention can also be tailored to the unique needs of each classroom. If the teachers report that students typically laugh if someone is being made fun of, then the interventionist can focus on those scenarios within the book and provided extra practice with perspective-taking, role-playing, and discussion of positive versus negative bystander behavior. School psychologists’ unique training in education, psychology, and child development, allows them to use data collected at pretest to appropriately focus the intervention on the specific needs of the school and classroom in consultation with teachers.

Overall, previous and current findings of the BLP, as well as its flexibility and responsiveness to classroom concerns, point to the potential for the BLP program to become a full-fledged classroom-based social-emotional learning program with a focus on bullying prevention. School-based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs aim to help children “acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enhance personal development, social relationships, ethical behavior, and effective, productive work” (Taylor, Durlak, Oberle, & Weissberg, 2017, p. 1157). SEL programs specifically target areas of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies including: “self-awareness

(e.g., recognizing emotions, strengths and limitations, and values), self-management (e.g., regulating emotions and behaviors), social awareness (e.g., taking the perspective of and empathizing with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures), relationship skills (e.g., establishing and maintaining healthy relationships), and responsible decision making (e.g., making constructive choices across varied situations)” (Taylor, Durlak, Oberle, & Weissberg, 2017, p. 1157 ).

The Bullying Literature Project can promote school-based social-emotional learning in several ways. The BLP clarifies both positive and negative social behaviors by defining bullying for students and giving examples of how it might be harmful through stories and discussion questions. The BLP invites students to give their own examples and can include drawings of what bullying looks like and what good positive bystander behavior looks like through making student posters. More specifically, the BLP can target *self-awareness* by solidifying values that bullying is harmful and helping others is the right thing to do. Due to the flexibility of the intervention, implementers can invite students to provide their own personal examples of how bullying or social exclusion has impacted them or someone in their life and what others did that made them feel better or worse. This invitation to think about personal experiences can consolidate awareness of how bullying and passive bystander behavior can be harmful to others while increasing awareness that positive behaviors (supporting the victim, telling the bully to stop) can deter bullying. The BLP can also promote *social awareness* and *relationship building*, by asking discussion questions that facilitate empathy-building and perspective-taking with the victim while highlighting concrete behaviors that are helpful versus not helpful to the victim. Specifically, an implementer can ask discussion questions that help



students arrive at answers for why they should not laugh with the bully, tease the victim, or ignore a student that needs help (e.g., “how did she feel when other students were laughing at her? Why? How might you feel?”). The BLP can also help students understand social mechanisms that underlie passive defending (e.g., “why didn’t she help the first time? What made her become friends with the student later?”). Finally, by having adults model and children practice appropriate behaviors in role-play, the BLP can also improve *self-management* and *responsible decision making*. Modeling non-examples (punching the bully; whispering to the bully to stop; laughing with the bully) and good examples (telling the bully to stop in a loud voice while making eye contact; walking away if the bully does not stop; writing a nice letter to the victim telling them what you like about them) can teach specific skills and make expectations more explicit. Role-playing can give children the needed practice of these social skills so they can successfully implement these behaviors in real life with confidence. Additionally, children are invited to pledge to use these skills every day, which can aid them in responsible decision making, even when outside of the classroom. In conclusion, potential implementers are encouraged to consider the vast potential of the BLP intervention to help with broad social-emotional skills and specific helping behaviors within elementary age students.

## Appendix A: Characteristics and Outcomes of Bystander Measures Reviewed

Author/Name	Type	Description/Implementer/Targets	Sample	Duration	Control/Design	Bystander Int. Measure (#items)	Victimization and Bully/Other Measures	Outcomes
Location	Theory		Div ers.			Types		
a. Belgium b. Finland c. Germany d. Greece e. Italy f. Netherlands g. UK h. US	a. Socio-Ecological b. Socio-Cognitive c. Psycho-Education d. Trans-Theoretical Model of Beh. Change e. CBT f. Group Process Theory g. Behavioral Modification h. Other		NR = Not Reported D = Diver ND = Not Diverse			a. Bystander attitude b. Social Skills/Prosocial c. Self-efficacy to intervene d. Intention to intervene e. Bystander Behavior (e.g., presence or absence of intervening, negative or positive behavior)		S Effects = Significant NS Effects = Non-significant A = Age effect
<b>MAIN REVIEW (1980-2017)</b>								
*Andreou (2008); Curriculum Based Anti-Bullying Program <sup>d</sup>	Curriculum <sup>a</sup>	Education on types of victimization and participant roles. Students identifying personal participant role behaviors and consequences. Practiced alternative ways of responding. Class rules. Small group and whole group discussions/Teachers/Students	N=418 4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> grade <sup>l</sup>	2 hours a week for 1 month/4 sessions	Y; QE	Pro-bully Scale (9 items) and Pro-victim Scale (9 items) (Stevens, Van Oost, and De Bourdeaudhuij, 2000) <sup>a</sup>  Bystanders (3 items/scale) (Stevens, Van Oost, and De Bourdeaudhuij 2000) <sup>c, d, e</sup>	Peer Victimization Scale (6 items) and Bullying Behavior Scale (6 items; Austin and Joseph, 1996)	S Effects: Increase in negative attitudes to bullies; positive attitudes to victims; rates of self-efficacy; Intervened to a greater degree compared to control  NS Effects: Across variables 6 months posttest
Espelage, Rose, & Polanin, (2016); Second Step-Student Success Through Prevention (SSSTP) <sup>h</sup>	Whole School <sup>e</sup>	Lessons include direct training in social skills (e.g., empathy, communication skills, problem-solving, friendship skills, emotion regulation) Teachers/Students with Disabilities	N = 12 6 <sup>th</sup> grade <sup>d</sup>	3 years; 13-15 lesson/year.  50-min or 2 x 25min/lesson	Y; RC T	Empathic Concern (7 items; Davis, 1983) <sup>b</sup>  Caring of Others scale (4 items; Crick, 1996) <sup>b</sup>  Willingness to Intervene in Bullying Episodes (5 items; Espelage, Green, & Polanin, 2012) <sup>d</sup>	The Psychological Sense of School Membership (15 items; PSM; Goodenow, 1993)  Grades and Achievement	S Effects: Willingness to intervene compared to control schools
*Evers (2007) Build Respect <sup>h</sup>	Computer/Behavior Modification <sup>d</sup>	Individualized computer sessions. Students receive feedback on progress across stages of change and helpful behavioral strategies needed to advance. Reinforcement given for progress. Includes text and multimedia (video testimonials).	N=71 9 <sup>th</sup> -12 grade <sup>l</sup>	3, 30-minute, computer sessions	Y; QE	Passive Bystander (3 items) <sup>e</sup>	Victim and Bully (3 items/each)  Desire to participate in bullying (6-8 items)	S Effects: Higher proportion. "no longer being bystanders" compared to control (for both high school and middle school)

\*Fonagy (2009)  
CAPSLE VS.  
SPC<sup>n</sup>

Whole School<sup>a</sup>  
Individualized

CAPSLE:  
school-wide;  
modify  
educational and  
disciplinary  
school climate

SPC: Mental  
health  
psychiatric  
consultation for  
behavior  
management  
modifications  
and individual  
or group  
counseling/psychiatric residents  
or school  
staff/students

N=576  
3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>  
grade<sup>l</sup>

CAPSLE:  
2-year  
intervention  
SPC: 4  
hours a  
week  
for 2  
years

Y;  
E

Peer Nomination of  
Helpful Bystander:  
(3 items) each  
describing  
aggressive and  
helpful bystander  
(Vernberg, Jacobs, &  
Hershberger, 1999).<sup>e</sup>

Empathy<sup>b</sup> (see next  
column)

Peer Nomination:  
Overt and relational  
aggression (6 items);  
“ “ victimization (6  
items) (Crick and  
Bigbee, 1998)

Self-report: The  
Peer Experiences  
Questionnaire  
(Vernberg et al.,  
1999) reports  
targets and  
perpetrators of  
aggression, concern  
for victims’  
experience, beliefs  
about aggression

S Effects: Both cond.  
reported less  
aggressive  
bystanding,  
compared to  
controls. Empathy  
remained stable  
only in CAPSLE  
schools vs. control  
schools saw decline  
in empathy over 3  
years.

SPC: helpful  
bystanding  
increased in 1st year  
compared to  
control; NS for  
second year

Follow Up: CAPSLE  
had more helpful  
bystanding  
compared to  
Treatment as usual

Author/Name	Type	Description/Implement/Targets	Sample	Duration	Control/Design	Bystander Int. Measures (#items)	Victimization and Bullying /Other Measures	Outcomes
	Location	Theory	Divers.			Types		
	a. Belgium	a. Socio-	NR = Not Reported			a. Bystander attitudes/beliefs		S Effects = Significant
	b. Finland	b. Ecological				b. Social Skills/Prosocial		NS Effects = Non-sig.
	c. Germany	c. Cognitive	D = Divers.			c. Self-efficacy to intervene		A = Age effect
	d. Greece	d. Psycho-				d. Intention to intervene		
	e. Italy	e. Education	ND = Not Diverse			e. Bystander Behavior		
	f. Netherlands	f. Trans-				(e.g., presence or absence		
	g. UK	g. Theoretical				intervening, neg. and pos.		
	h. US	h. Model of Beh. Change				behavior)		
		e. CBT						
		f. Group Process Theory						
		g. Behavioral Modification						
		h. Other						
*Frey, 2005; <sup>h</sup>	Whole School <sup>a,b</sup>	Literature-based lessons. Socio-emotional skill-building (peer relations, emotion management, recognizing, refusing, and reporting bullying behavior). School-wide program guide and staff training to foster staff responsiveness to bullying. Teachers/Students and Teachers	N=913 3 <sup>rd</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> grade <sup>D</sup>	12-14-week period;  10 social skill lessons	Y; E	The Student Experience Survey Beliefs subscale <sup>a</sup>  Teacher ratings of peer interaction skills (17 items) (Walker & McConnell, 1995) <sup>b</sup>  Observational Coding of destructive bystander behavior <sup>e</sup>	The Student Experience Survey Behavior subscale (Self report of victimization and bullying)  Observational coding of bullying, non-bullying aggression, agreeable social skills, and arguments	S Effects: less accepting of bullying/aggression and more responsibility to intervene with friends who were bullied compared to control. Children reported greater adult responsiveness to school bullying compared to control  NS effect of teacher rated social skills and bystander behavior
*Karna et al. (2011) <sup>b</sup>	Whole School <sup>b</sup>	Awareness; Role-playing; Modeling; Parent involvement. Developing class rules against bullying. Discussion with students	N = 8,239  4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> grade <sup>NR</sup>	9 months	Y; E	Peer Nominations of Participant Roles (12 items)—Defender, Reinforcer to bully, Assistant to bully (Participant Role Questionnaire; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004); <sup>e</sup>	Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 1996) (self-report)  Peer nomination of bully and peer-report of victimization	S Effects: Increased self-efficacy for defending (self-report), increased bystander assistance and decrease reinforcing of the

		involved in bullying. Anti-bullying computer /Teachers and Staff/Students				Self-efficacy for Defending (3 items) (Poyhonen et al., 2010) <sup>c</sup>		bully (peer report) compared to control.
						Anti-bullying Attitudes (10 items) <sup>3</sup>		
						Empathy Scale (7 items) (Poyhonen, Karna, & Salmivalli, 2008) <sup>b</sup>		
Karna et al. (2013); KiVa <sup>b</sup>	See above	See above + Computer game: I KNOW, I CAN, I DO for primary grades 1-3)	N = 6,927 1 <sup>st</sup> - 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade  N=16,50: 7 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> grade <sup>NR</sup>	See above	Y; E	Peer Nominations of Participant Roles (12 items)—Defender, Reinforcer to bully, Assistant to bully (Participant Role Questionnaire; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004); <sup>e</sup>	See above	S Effects: 1-3 <sup>rd</sup> grade: decrease in bullying compared to control schools. Decrease in victimization depended on gender for student and classroom level.
								7 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> grade: decrease in assisting the bully and reinforcing bully for boys; <b>decrease in defending behavior for boys</b> ; decrease in peer-reported victimization, with > effects for younger students. Bullying was reduced for boys, especially if proportion of boys in the classroom was higher
								NS bullying rates for girls with the avg. proportion of boys in classroom NS effects
*McLaughlin, 2009; Effective Bully Prevention <sup>h</sup>	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy <sup>e</sup>	CBT and modeling with media/Teacher/Stu dent	N = 41 males  6 <sup>th</sup> grade	4 weeks	Y; QE	McLaughlin Bystander Scales <sup>a</sup>  Peer Nominations of Participant Roles (12 items)— Defender, Reinforcer to bully, Assistant to bully (Participant Role Questionnaire; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004); <sup>d</sup>  Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale <sup>c</sup>	Olweus Bully/Victim Ques- tionnaire (Olweus, 1996) (self-report)	

Author/Name	Type	Description/Implementers/Targets	Sample	Duration	Control/Design	Bystander Int. Measures (#items)	Victimization and Bullying/Other Measures	Outcomes
Location	Theory		Divers.			Types		
a. Belgium	a. Socio-Ecological		NR = Not Reported			a. Bystander attitudes/beliefs		S Effects = Significant
b. Finland	b. Socio-Ecological		D = Divers.			b. Social Skills/Prosocial		NS Effects = Non-significant
c. Germany	c. Cognitive					c. Self-efficacy to intervene		A = Age effect
d. Greece	d. Psycho-Education					d. Intention to intervene		
e. Italy	e. Trans-Theoretical Model of Beh. Change		ND = Not Diverse			e. Bystander Behavior (e.g., presence or absence intervening, neg. and pos. behavior)		
f. Netherlands	f. CBT							
g. UK	g. Group Process Theory							
h. US	h. Behavioral Modification							

*Menesini (2003); Befriending Intervention <sup>e</sup>	Training select youth as peer influencers <sup>f</sup>	Class intervention: developing values and attitudes toward "peer support activities" in  Training selected peer supporters: selected children skills trained on facilitating interactions with other children and assigned tasks/Trainer/Students	N= 293  6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> graders <sup>h</sup>	1 year	Y; QE	Peer Nominations of Participant Roles (21 items)—reinforcer, assistant, defender, outsider (adaptation of Salmivalli, et al., 1999) <sup>e</sup>  Attitudes towards bullying (11 items; Menesini, 1997) <sup>a</sup>	N/A	S effects: Pro- bullyingbullying scales (bully, reinforcer assistant) increased in the control group, but were presented stable or slightly decreased values in the experimental group.  Outsiders showed an increase in this role in the control group and decrease in exp. group  NS treatment effects for role of defenders and victims.
*Merrel (2004); 5 W's of Bullying Drama intervention program <sup>n</sup>	Small Group Social Skills Training <sup>c</sup>	Uses drama in education format to teach the bystander how to interact with school officials, victims and bullies/Researcher/ Students	N=56 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	1 year 7 sessions	Y;E	Bullying questionnaire <sup>a,e</sup>  Actual and imagined responses to scenarios	N/A	S effects for <i>theoretical</i> responses to bullying situations: reporting to school off., offensive remarks, sexual harassment, girls planning to jump another girl, skipping school because of bullying and school safety  NS effects for <i>actual</i> reporting bullying, improving barriers to reporting, and when to report
Noncentini & Menesini (2016); KIVA <sup>f</sup>	Whole School <sup>b</sup>	Awareness; Role- playing; Modeling; Parent involvement. Developing class rules against bullying. Discussion with students involved in bullying. Anti-bullying computer /Teachers and Staff/Students	N = 2184  4 <sup>th</sup> and 6 grade <sup>NR</sup>	9 months	Y; E	Revised version of the Questionnaire on Attitudes toward Bullying and Victims (12 items) (Menesini et al. 2003) <sup>a</sup> ;  Empathy toward victim scale (7 items) (Pöyhönen, Kärnä, & Salmivalli 2008) <sup>b</sup>	The Florence Bullying- Victimization Scales were used (14 items) (Palladino et al. 2016).	S Effects:  Reduced bullying and victimization in both grades <b>Grade 4:</b> <i>higher rates of increase</i> in pro victim attitudes and empathy toward the victim, and <i>higher rates of decrease</i> in pro-bullying attitudes in exp. vs. control. <b>Grade 6:</b> Pro-bullying attitudes decreased across time in the exper. group, whereas in the control group they increased.  NS Effects: Grade 6 pro- victim/victim attitudes compared to control

Author/Name	Type	Description/Implement/Targets	Sample	Duration	Control/Design	Bystander Int. Measures (#items)	Victimization and Bullying /Other Measures	Outcomes
	Location	Theory	Divers.			Types		
	a. Belgium b. Finland c. Germany d. Greece e. Italy f. Netherlands g. UK h. US	a. Socio-Ecological b. Socio-Cognitive c. Psycho-Education d. Trans-Theoretical Model of Beh. Change e. CBT f. Group Process Theory g. Behavioral Modification h. Other	NR = Not Reported  D = Divers.  ND = Not Diverse			a. Bystander attitudes/beliefs b. Social Skills/Prosocial c. Self-efficacy to intervene d. Intention to intervene e. Bystander Behavior (e.g., presence or absence intervening, neg. and pos. behavior)		S Effects = Significant NS Effects = Non-significant A = Age effect
Van der Ploeg, Steglich, & Veenstra (2016); KiVa <sup>f</sup>	Small Support Groups <sup>f</sup>	Support group (6-8 children) including the bullies, assistants, defenders and friends of the victim and pro-social high-status peers. The victim is not included. KiVa team members share concern about the victim. Children in the support group are encouraged to find ways to help victim/Support Group/Victim	N=38 victims  2 <sup>nd</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> grade <sup>NR</sup>	Pre-post data for a one-year interv. (2x)	Y; matched control	Change in defending via victim nomination of defenders <sup>e</sup>	Victim indication of if the bullying situation had changed and;  Change in victimization score via peer nomination;  Change in frequency of victimization via self-report;  Perception of classroom and school	S Effect: Victims w/support group had more defenders at the end of the school year than victims without. Victims reported reduction in victimization in the short term.  NS effect: long-term decrease in victimization (lasting over the school year); victim feelings of well-being at school long term.
(Pack, White, Raczyński, Wang, 2011); Safe School Ambassadors Program <sup>h</sup>	Training select youth as peer influencers <sup>f</sup>	Ambassadors attend a 2-day-training session and learn how to identify, prevent, and respond to student aggression and mistreatment as proactive and helpful bystanders/Staff/Students	N~400 Amb. and Key Students  Middle School <sup>NR</sup>	2 years	Y; QE	Survey for ambassadors and key students (94-item survey) <sup>a,b,e</sup>	School Climate Measures administered to all students	S effects: Helpful intervention higher for male Ambassadors. than controls. Ambassadors friends noticed more helpful interventions and less mistreatment than Friends of Key Students at the control schools. Process data indicated positive effects on discipline and overall climate. Significant reductions in suspensions.
Ross & Horner, 2009; Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Supports (BP-PBS) <sup>h</sup>	Positive Behavior Supports/Whole School <sup>f</sup>	Teach "being respectful" to all students. Three-step response (stop, walk, talk) to decrease social reinforcement of neg. behavior. Universal staff response when students report incident/Teacher/Staff	N = 6; 3 <sup>rd</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> grade <sup>NR</sup>	60 school days	Y; SS-MB D	Recorded bystanders appropriate response, negative response, or no response to disrespectful behavior who were 3 or less meters away, within 5 seconds of each problem occurrence <sup>f</sup> .	Recorded appropriate and inappropriate victim responses. Recorded frequency of physical or verbal aggression of 6 target children during lunch recess as well as non-target peers.	S effects: Increased use of "stop" by both victims and bystanders, decrease in victim negative response (i.e., complaining, fighting back), and the decrease in bystander positive response (i.e., cheering, laughing). Decrease mean levels of problem behavior per school day Reductions in variability for all 6 targeted students.
*Schumacher, 2007; Bullying Video Program <sup>h</sup>	Media <sup>h</sup>	Students were shown a 60 second video on a conflict with no resolution. Student viewer tasked to think of a potential solution. Video/Student	N=825 9-12 <sup>th</sup> grade <sup>ND</sup>	1 minute	Y; E	Bystander attitudes toward bullying (7 items) <sup>a</sup>	NA	SE in attitude toward bullying compared to control who did not view video.

*Stevens A (2000) <sup>a</sup>	Curriculum <sup>b</sup>	Social skills training Problem solving Cog. Perspective Taking (peer, bully, victim). Used videos, modeling techniques, discussions, role playing/Teacher/St udent	N= 301 10-12 year olds; NR	4 sessions; each session = two 50- minute periods; total 8 hours of training	Y; E	Self-report questionnaire (25 items) <sup>a,c,d,e</sup>	N/A	Posttest 1: NS  1-year FU: approaching sign— smaller decrease in intervening behaviors compared to controls over time
Author/Name	Type	Description/Implement /Targets	Sample	Duration	Control /Design	Bystander Int. Measures (#items)	Victimization and Bullying /Other Measures	Outcomes
	Location	Theory	Divers.			Types		
	a. Belgium b. Finland c. Germany d. Greece e. Italy f. Netherlands g. UK h. US	a. Socio- Ecological b Socio- Cognitive c. Psycho- Education d. Trans- Theoretical Model of Beh. Change e. CBT f. Group Process Theory g. Behavioral Modification h. Other	NR = Not Reported  D = Divers.  ND = Not Diverse			a. Bystander attitudes/beliefs b. Social Skills/Prosocial c. Self-efficacy to intervene d. Intention to intervene e. Bystander Behavior (e.g., presence or absence intervening, neg. and pos. behavior)		S Effects = Significant NS Effects = Non-significant A = Age effect
*Stevens B (2000) <sup>a</sup>	See above	See above	N=401 13-16 year-olds; NR	See above	See above	See above	N/A	Posttest 1: S effects: anti-bully, pro- victim, self-efficacy to intervene, and extent of intervening. Posttest 2: NS
Vannini et al., (2011); Fun with Empathic Agents to Achieve Novel Outcomes in Teaching (FearNot!) (2011) <sup>b,c</sup>	Computer <sup>h</sup>	Pedagogical Role play to increase cognitive and affective empathy in a virtual learning environment. Participants counsel the victim regarding coping strategies to handle repeated bullying/Computer/ Student	N= 1,133  7-11 years old NR	3 weeks/30 minutes a week	Y; QE	Peer nominations of defenders <sup>e</sup>  Number of coping strategies suggested by participant  Theory of Mind (justification for provided coping strategy)  Affective empathy (match between participant and victims affect) <sup>b</sup>	Peer nomination of victims	S effects: helped non-involved children to become defenders in the German sub-sample. NS effect in the UK sub-sample.  Children who were New Defenders at T2 and T3 were more popular at the baseline assessment than children who stayed non-involved at T2 and T3.  New Defender girls reporting highest scores of emotional contagion and New Defender boys reporting the lowest.
Wang, Couch, Rodriguez, & Lee, (2015); The Bullying Literature Project (BLP) <sup>b</sup>	Curriculum <sup>a</sup>	During each session interventionists read a story with students in the classroom and engaged students in discussion, writing, and role play activities.	N=168 3 <sup>rd</sup> -4th grade <sup>d</sup>	5 sessions, 35-45 minutes	Y; QE	Teacher report: Children's Social Behavior Scale- Teacher Form (4 items) (CSBS-TF; Crick 1996) <sup>b</sup>  Self-report: Social Emotional Assets and Resilience Scales-C (7 items) (short form for grades 3-6; SEARS; Merrell, 2011). <sup>b</sup>	The Verbal and Physical Bullying Scale- Victimization - Perpetration-Student Version (VPBS; Radliff et al. 2015; Swearer et al. 2008).  Peer Friendships: A subscale from the ClassMaps Survey (CMS; Doll et al. 2010)	S effects on bystander's teacher- rated prosocial behavior.  Marginally significant effects on self- reported social- emotional assets compared to wait-list control.  NS treatment effects for bullying perpetration or victimization  NS treatment effect for perception of friendship quality in the classroom.

*Whitaker et al., (2004); Expect Respect <sup>b</sup>	Curriculum <sup>a</sup>	Lessons highlighted playful vs. hurtful teasing, knowledge on bullying/ sexual harassment, and encouraged intervening. Included writing assignments, role plays, and class discussions. Teacher/Student	N=1763 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	12 weekly sessions	Y; E	Bystander Intention (4 items) <sup>d</sup>  Bullying and Sexual Harassment (14 items) <sup>a</sup>  Student perception of adult action (5 items) <sup>a</sup>  Attitudes about bullying (21 item) <sup>a</sup>	Victimization and student response to being a victim	NS effects for bullying awareness at FU; S effects for intentions to intervene for physical (PT and FU) and verbal (only PT); telling an adult (boys only), and anti-bully attitudes (girls only) at PT compared to control
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## Appendix B: Overview of BLP Curriculum

**Table B2: Overview of the BLP Curriculum**

Session	Book and Author	Skills Targeted	Sample Discussion Questions	Activities
1	<i>Bully Beans</i> by Julia Cook	Introduce WITS; different feelings; empathy for students being victimized	“How did kids feel when Bobbette was mean to them?” “Was there anything special about the beans? What did they represent?”	WITS bookmark; WITS promise; role playing to practice WITS strategies
2	<i>Just Kidding</i> by Trudy Ludwig	Use of humor when bullied; strategies to calm down; “tattling” versus seeking help	“When do you think teasing is okay and when is it not?” “When Dad was talking to D.J., he was too angry to answer. What helped him to calm down in the story? What can you do to calm down when you feel too angry to talk to an adult about teasing or bullying?”	Cartoon strip with bullying situations; role playing the cartoons to practice strategies
3	<i>The Recess Queen</i> by Alexis O’neill	How to intervene as a bystander; including others	“If Mean Jean pushed or said something mean to Katie Sue when she invited her to play, what would you do?” “What can you do to help when you see a Recess Queen or Recess King at school?”	Completing stories regarding bullying situations; role playing how to respond as a victim and a bystander
4	<i>Say Something</i> by Peggy Moss	Empathy for students being victimized; how to stand up for others	“Why are they laughing? Is it okay to laugh when other students are being made fun of? How does it [laughing] make the girl feel?”	Group poster of different strategies

5	<i>The Juice Box Bully</i> by Bob Sornson and Maria Dismondy	Respecting others' differences; appropriate bystander behavior	"Ruby said 'when someone acts hurtfully, we all speak up.' What can you say when you want to speak up?"	Story Booklet of all the strategies learned; role play selected scenes from booklet
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*Note:* The four WITS strategies and other strategies are reviewed at the beginning of sessions 2 through 5; students are provided an opportunity to share how they used their WITS or other strategies during the previous week and are praised for using strategies; all students in the class make a pledge to use their strategies at the end of every session.

## Appendix C: Student and Teacher Packet

### Form C.1: Student Assent

Dear Student:

Your school has volunteered to participate in a research study by Dr. Cecilia Cheung, assistant professor of psychology at University of California, Riverside, and Dr. Cixin Wang, Nationally Certified School Psychologists #42756, Licensed Psychologist MD #05035, and assistant professor of School Psychology at University of Maryland, College Park. For the study, you and your classmates will be **reading 5 children's books (once a week for about 45 minutes per session)** about peer relationships, discussing the feelings of the characters in the story, your feelings, and learning appropriate ways to handle peer conflict and bullying behavior. You will be discussing these stories either with your teacher or with a research assistant. You, your teacher, and all the other students who are participating will be taking 3 questionnaires on bullying during the program.

We want you to be a part of this study because you are in a class that is participating. Your parents have already said it's okay for you to participate, but we want to ask you if you would like to be involved in the program. The program will take place during your regular school day and the questionnaires take around 45 minutes to complete.

All the information you provide to us will be kept private. The only information we cannot keep private by law is information about child abuse. If a child is being abused, by law, we must tell the police. Other than that, all information is private and only Dr. Wang will see your personal information.

It is your choice to participate in this study or not. If you decide not to participate, your teacher will provide another activity for you to do while your class participates. If you decide to participate but change your mind later, you can stop at any time.

By writing your name below you agree that:

- You want to participate in the study
- You understand that you do not have to participate, but you are choosing to
- You understand that you can change your mind at any time
- You have read and understand what was written above.

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Student's Name

Signature

Date

## **Form C.2: Instruction form for students**

**Instructions:** In this survey you will be asked to respond to questions and statements about bullying. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. People will not know which responses belong to you or someone else after we code the data. Please remember: There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer every question, and do your best.

Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Usually, bullying happens over and over. Here are some examples of bullying:

- Punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically
- Spreading bad rumors about people
- Keeping certain people out of a group
- Teasing people in a mean way
- Getting certain people to “gang up” on others

**But we don’t call it bullying when the teasing is done in a friendly and playful way.**

**Also, it is not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argue or fight.**

**Form C.3: Pre-intervention survey used for data-based decision making**

**In this part, you will be asked about times when you were bullied.**

**1. Where have you been bullied?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom      | <input type="checkbox"/> Cafeteria       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bus            | <input type="checkbox"/> Before school   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gym            | <input type="checkbox"/> After school    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hallway        | <input type="checkbox"/> Sporting events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bathroom       | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online/texting | <input type="checkbox"/> Recess          |

**2a. How often have you been bullied at school since the last time you took this survey** (Check one)

- ☐ one or more times a day  
☐ one or more times a week  
☐ one or more times a month  
☐ I have never been bullied at school.

**2b. How often have you seen bullying happen at school since the last time you took this survey** (Check one)

- ☐ one or more times a day  
☐ one or more times a week  
☐ one or more times a month  
☐ I have never seen bullying happen at school.

**3. When you were bullied, how often did you...**

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
a	Walk away?	1	2	3	4	5
b	Ignore the bully?	1	2	3	4	5

c .	Talk it out with the bully?(e.g., ask the bully to stop)	1	2	3	4	5
d .	Get help from your teachers?	1	2	3	4	5
e .	Get help from your parents?	1	2	3	4	5
f .	Cry or yell at the bully?	1	2	3	4	5
g .	Physically fight back?	1	2	3	4	5

#### 4. How much of a problem was the bullying for you?

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
a.	Made me feel upset	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	I couldn't make friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	Made me feel bad or sad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.	Made it hard to focus and learn at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.	Made me feel scared or worried	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f.	I didn't come to school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g.	I had problems with my family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h.	Other ways this was a problem:					

#### 5. Why do you think you were bullied?

Because:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> they think my face looks funny | <input type="checkbox"/> my parents        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> they think I'm fat             | <input type="checkbox"/> my brother        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> they think I'm skinny          | <input type="checkbox"/> my sister         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> they think I look too old      | <input type="checkbox"/> my family is poor |

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> they think I look too young     | <input type="checkbox"/> my family has a lot of money          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> they think I am a wimp          | <input type="checkbox"/> someone in my family has a disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> they think my friends are weird | <input type="checkbox"/> I am too tall                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm sick a lot                  | <input type="checkbox"/> I am too short                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm disabled                    | <input type="checkbox"/> I am in special education             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I get good grades               | <input type="checkbox"/> I get angry a lot                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I get bad grades                | <input type="checkbox"/> I cry a lot                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> where I live                    | <input type="checkbox"/> I can't get along with other people   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the clothes I wear              | <input type="checkbox"/> they say I'm gay                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the color of my skin            | <input type="checkbox"/> the way I talk                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the country I'm from            | <input type="checkbox"/> I act too much like a boy             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am different                  | <input type="checkbox"/> I act too much like a girl            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the church I go to              | <input type="checkbox"/> other (describe):<br>_____            |

**Form C.4: Bystander behavior self-report measure (created by interventionists)**

**When you see other kids being bullied, how often did you...**

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
a	Tell a teacher?	1	2	3	4	5
b	Laugh at the student being bullied?	1	2	3	4	5
c	Tell a parent?	1	2	3	4	5
d	Join in with the bully?	1	2	3	4	5
e	Not do anything?	1	2	3	4	5
f	Ask the bully to stop?	1	2	3	4	5
g	Help the student being bullied in other ways?	1	2	3	4	5



**Form C.5. Attitudes related to bullying self-report measure (The Bully Survey-Student Version; Swearer and Cary, 2003)**

**Now, you will be asked about your thoughts about bullying. How much do you agree with each sentence?**

		<b>Totally False</b>	<b>Sort of False</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Sort of True</b>	<b>Totally True</b>
a.	Most people who get bullied ask for it	1	2	3	4	5
b.	Bullying is a problem for kids	1	2	3	4	5
c.	Bullies are popular	1	2	3	4	5
d.	I don't like bullies	1	2	3	4	5
e.	I am afraid of the bullies at my school	1	2	3	4	5
f.	Bullying is good for wimpy kids	1	2	3	4	5
g.	Bullies hurt kids	1	2	3	4	5
h.	I would be friends with a bully	1	2	3	4	5
i.	I can understand why someone would bully other kids	1	2	3	4	5
j.	I think bullies should be punished	1	2	3	4	5
k.	Bullies don't mean to hurt anybody	1	2	3	4	5
l.	Bullies make kids feel bad	1	2	3	4	5
m.	I feel sorry for kids who are bullied	1	2	3	4	5
n.	Being bullied is no big deal	1	2	3	4	5
o.	It's easier to bully someone if they don't know who you are	1	2	3	4	5

**Form C.6: Peer friendship self-report measures (ClassMaps Survey subscale; Doll et al. 2010).**

**These questions ask what is true about your class and your school.**

	<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>
<b>I have a lot of fun with my friends in this class.</b>	1	2	3	4
<b>My friends care about me a lot.</b>	1	2	3	4
<b>I have friends to eat lunch with and play with at recess.</b>	1	2	3	4
<b>I have friends that like me the way I am.</b>	1	2	3	4
<b>My friends like me as much as they like other kids.</b>	1	2	3	4
<b>I have friends who will stick up for me if someone picks on me.</b>	1	2	3	4

**Form C.7: Victimization peer report measure (*The Verbal and Physical Bullying Scale-Victimization*; Swearer, Turner, Givens, & Pollack, 2008)**

**How did you get bullied at school?**

	They...	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
a.	Called me names	1	2	3	4	5
b.	Made fun of me	1	2	3	4	5
c.	Said they will do bad things to me	1	2	3	4	5
d.	Played nasty/mean jokes on me	1	2	3	4	5
e.	Wouldn't let me be a part of their group	1	2	3	4	5
f.	Broke my things	1	2	3	4	5
g.	Attacked me	1	2	3	4	5
h.	Nobody would talk to me	1	2	3	4	5
i.	Wrote mean things about me online or through text	1	2	3	4	5
j.	Said mean things behind my back	1	2	3	4	5
k.	Pushed or shoved me	1	2	3	4	5

**Form C.8: Social validity self-report measure (interventionist created)**

**Please rate each of the following statements based on how you feel/think about the *Bullying Literature Project*.**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1) I liked this program.	1	2	3	4
2) I learned useful skills to improve my interaction with peers.	1	2	3	4
3) I am using the skills that were taught in this program (e.g., WITS).	1	2	3	4
4) I would recommend this program to others.	1	2	3	4
5) I liked the way this program was taught.	1	2	3	4

**Form C.9: Pro-social behavior teacher report measure (Children's Social Behavior Scale—Teacher Form; Crick, 1996)**

Please rate how true each statement is for \_\_\_\_\_ **this school year:**

	Never True	Seldom True	Sometimes True	Often True	Almost Always True
1. This child says supportive things to peers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. This child tries to cheer up peers when they are sad or upset about something.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. This child is helpful to peers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. This child is kind to peers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Form C.10: Parent informed consent

### Children's Literature Project to Reduce Bullying among Elementary School Students

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Your school/district has agreed to participate in a research study designed to reduce and prevent bullying behaviors conducted by Dr. Cixin Wang, Nationally Certified School Psychologists #42756, Licensed Psychologist MD #05035, from the University of California, Riverside.

This study will evaluate how elementary school students respond to a 5-week classroom-based literature program that is designed to teach new ways to handle peer conflict and change harmful attitudes related to bullying. We want to examine if students' behavior and attitudes towards bullying change after the intervention and if a change is observed by the teacher and parents. You have been selected as a potential participant because your school has agreed to participate.

This study will involve a 5 week bullying prevention program that will take place once per week for about 30-45 minutes per session. During each session, a graduate research assistant will read a book about peer relationship to the class, facilitate a discussion about the book, and teach students appropriate social skills to cope with peer conflict. A short writing or art activity related to the reading will also be assigned. To examine the efficacy of the program, a questionnaire on bullying behaviors and attitudes will be given to all participating students before the intervention and directly after the intervention. We are also asking all teachers participating to fill out a questionnaire at those two time points regarding bullying behaviors within their classroom. To compensate your time, you will receive a **\$45 gift card** at the end of the project.

To maintain confidentiality of participants during this study, all written identifying information will be coded and the only information that will be attached to those codes is general demographic information.

Your participation is completely voluntary and will not affect your relationship with your school district, your school, or the University of California, Riverside. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw consent and stop participation at any time without any penalty. You can choose to only engage in parts of the research activity (conduct program, but not fill out questionnaires, etc.).

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Cixin Wang at 951-827-5238. If you have questions about your rights or your child's rights as a research subject, please contact the UCR Office of Research Integrity at [\(951\) 827-4811](tel:9518274811) or [\(951\) 827-5549](tel:9518275549), or to contact them by email, please use [HRRB1@ucr.edu](mailto:HRRB1@ucr.edu). By signing your name below, you indicate that:

- You have read and understand everything written above
- You agree to willingly participate in all aspects of the study
- You know you are able to withdraw consent at any time

---

Signature and date

## The Bully Survey – Teacher Version (BYS-T) ©

**Instructions:** In this survey you will be asked to respond to questions and statements about bullying.

Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Usually, bullying happens over and over.

- Punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically
- Spreading bad rumors about people
- Keeping certain people out of a group
- Teasing people in a mean way
- Getting certain people to “gang up” on others

\*\*\*\*\*

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## Appendix D: Treatment Fidelity

Treatment Fidelity Checklist: Bullying Literature Project  
Week \_\_\_\_ Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Other interventionist \_\_\_\_\_  
School \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

On a 3-point scale (3=always, 2=sometimes, 1=never), how consistently does the treatment provider do the following things?

1. Review WITS and ask students if they used WITS during the previous weeks (starting from week 2) \_\_\_\_
2. Introduce the story with the opening questions? \_\_\_\_
3. Read the full story to the students? \_\_\_\_
4. Ask at least ½ of the post-reading questions? \_\_\_\_
5. Keeps students on task during reading. \_\_\_\_
6. Keeps students on task during questions. \_\_\_\_
7. Redirects conversation as needed. \_\_\_\_
8. Praise students for appropriate answers and for participating. \_\_\_\_
9. Model the appropriate strategies. \_\_\_\_
10. Complete the planned activities (e.g., writing and role play activities). \_\_\_\_



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